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ABSTRACT

This monograph deals with some issues of how adults learn and ways to enhance teaching, thereby increasing adults' learning gains. The issues are the gaps between theory and practice, participation and retention, and methods and strategies, and the perennial debate about literacy's multiple meanings and their implications. "Participation and Retention Concerns of Black Women Adult Learners" (Juanita Johnson-Bailey) addresses the support and sensitivity to cultural factors that help African Americans continue their education. "Methods for Developing Literacy in Urban Community Colleges" (Carol S. Chadwick) proposes ways to improve reading and writing skills through practice tips for teachers and provides a step-by-step approach with helpful hints to students from narrative and expository standpoints. "Adult Readers' Metacognitive Strategies: Theory and Practice" (Mary Lee Field) argues, with a focus on metacognitive strategies, that students become more adept and competent at skilled reading when epistemological considerations are in place. "African American English as an Instructional Resource for Teachers of African American Adults" (Talmadge C. Guy) continues theme of reading and writing in literacy education to promote racial advancement and pushes for culturally relevant education in adult literacy classrooms that include bi-dialectal instruction to reduce the sense of threat (from the language perspective) to their personal and community identity. Each paper contains references. (YLB)

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Models for Adult and Lifelong Learning
Volume 2

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Pedagogy for Adult Learners: Methods and Strategies

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Models for Adult and Lifelong Learning
Volume 2

Pedagogy for Adult Learners: Methods and Strategies

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

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INTRODUCTION

Adult Education scholars (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991; Cross, 1981) have addressed the phenomenal increase in demand for adult learning opportunities and the various contexts in which these demands are situated. So diverse are the backgrounds, characteristics and objectives of the adult learners, their settings, needs and aspirations, that successful learning can occur only with a carefully designed set of teaching-learning strategies and a commitment to the teaching-learning process.

Research demonstrates that the key to successful adult learning is twofold: first, understanding the adult learner and, second, understanding the characteristics they bring with them. Knowles (1984) examined the adult learner from both the intellectual and affective domains and established basic physiological and psychological differences between learning in early and later years. Adult learning is different from other kinds of learning. Adult learning is predicated more on individual rather than collective needs, and the adult learner comes to the learning venue with prior knowledge and experiences. Take for example, the 23-year-old welfare mother of three who joins a GED, class and compare her with the 60-year-old farmer studying the new computer system, or the Hmong immigrant who studies the US Constitution in an adult education class. Though the settings are different, the objective is the same—learning with a purpose, a self-directed focus. The more applicable the knowledge acquired for solving practical life problems, the greater the likelihood of success.

That teaching style significantly affects the learning process is an understatement. Be it in the classroom or elsewhere, the goal of the teaching-learning transaction is the acquisition of desired knowledge and skills, and a foundation on which to further personal growth and well-being. It is therefore important to pay attention to teacher proficiencies such as their teaching style, content mastery and attitudes—fundamental elements that influence the learning process of adults. Not only is there a preoccupation with who the learners are, but there is an equal challenge in knowing how and why they learn. Of the three sources of relationship satisfaction in adult learning, Kidd (1973) identifies the first as occur-

ring between the student and the teacher, followed by that between the student and student and, ultimately, the student and subject matter.

This monograph deals with some of the issues of how adults learn and ways to enhance teaching, thereby increasing learning gains of adults. In other words, design and implement effective teaching strategies and you can be assured of favorable learning outcomes. As part of the classroom dynamics, teaching strategies must incorporate plans to address gender concerns and culturally diverse needs given the growing presence of minority populations. Social supports such as tolerance, patience and approval are advantageous to building coping mechanisms in the educational world.

The issues addressed by the four articles in this volume are all familiar—gaps between theory and practice, participation and retention, and methods and strategies, and the perennial debate about literacy's multiple meanings and their implications. But the four articles independently and collectively explore these familiar themes in novel ways. They suggest linkages between theory and practice as a means of addressing pedagogical and other challenges in the field of adult learning. They project participation problems beyond the familiar situational, dispositional and institutional barriers (Johnstone & Rivera, 1965; Cross, 1981) to the confluence of race and gender, while underscoring their combined significance and impact from the perspective of the adult black female learner. Literacy's traditional interpretations and functional views are extended to include important sociocultural consideration in the development and selection of instructional materials. Addressed also are the unique characteristics of adult learners in colleges and universities, their pedagogical challenges, and strategies to enhance this group's reading and comprehension abilities.

This work is a product of the office of Adult and Lifelong Learning Research (ALLR), Interdisciplinary Studies Program, College of Lifelong learning, Wayne State University. It is supported through partnerships with the State of Michigan and other sponsors including the City of Detroit, the US Department of Education, and the United Way of America. ALLR program objectives include the following: a) promotion of intercollegiate and interdisciplinary scholarship on adult education; b) institutional cooperation with the state and related agencies; c) improved relationships with the educational community through delivery of serv-

ices in teacher training, formulation of degree programs, presentation of regular seminars on a disciplined inquiry in adult education; and d) volunteerism among undergraduate students through credit-bearing courses in which students teach basic skills to adult learners in the community.

This office aspires to serve as the central source at Wayne State University for the exchange of theory and practice in the field of adult learning, and to take on challenges posed in a state where conflicting signals on adult education funding and policy implementation leave practitioners disillusioned and concerned.

My thanks go to Karen Davis, Department Chair of Anthropology at Marygrove College whose assistance in initiating contacts and providing preliminary editorial help was invaluable. My thanks also go to Karen Small, my executive assistant and secretary to the Office of Adult and Lifelong Research who had to manage the paper trail and follow-up. To all our reviewers and consultants of the manuscripts, I also say thanks.

Overview of the Chapters

The contributors in this collection present essays dealing with teaching strategies in different adult learning contexts: a) increasing sensitivity to sociolinguistic and cultural realities of minorities, b) setting theoretical foundations for learning and teaching, and c) cultivating mentoring help for African American women demanding sensitivity and respect in higher education pursuits. One challenge remains constant, however, and that is to provide effective teacher-learning interactions in a setting with adult learners that addresses their needs and aspirations.

Juanita Johnson-Bailey's paper addresses the support of sensitivity to cultural factors that reduce the significance of learning among African Americans. Her study on re-entry African American women at the university level is situated within the argument of collective consciousness of women in a society that operates along the lines of race, gender and class. That they suffer from institutional and attitudinal barriers to the point where their participation is minimized educationally is evidenced by the interviews. As a result, they are marginalized.

Carol S. Chadwick is concerned with a different body of students at an inner-city community college. She proposes ways to improve reading and writing skills through practice tips for teachers. After a systematic assessment, she provides a step-by-step approach with helpful hints to students from both the narrative and expository standpoint.

Mary Lee Field's paper gives a stronger handle to teachers of reading and writing. With a focus on metacognitive strategies, Field argues that students become more adept and competent at skilled reading when epistemological considerations are in place. In fact, immigrants who need to speak English quickly learn faster via this approach. She suggests effective methods such as inventories and clusters that will stimulate students' metacognitive awareness in the learning process.

Talmadge Guy continues on the theme of reading and writing in literacy education to promote racial advancement. For him, sociolinguistic and environmental concerns become inhibiting factors to learners from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds because of inherent bias in the available literature. This is why he is opposed to competency-based exams or tests that are not bi-dialectal and thus tend to exclude adult literacy learners, largely speakers of African American English from the mainstream of American life. Language policy for classroom application should provide accommodation for non-standard dialects or African American English. He pushes for culturally relevant education in adult literacy classrooms that include bi-dialectal instruction to reduce the sense of threat in their personal and community identity from the language perspective.

The subscribers to this text are practitioners who work with adult students at the higher education level. They offer suggestions specific to teaching adults in various contexts to enhance learning. A couple of the authors draw attention to the continuing predicament of adult minority populations that are marginalized by past negative experiences and related psychological and institutional barriers.

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Participation & Retention Concerns of Black Women Adult Learners

Juanita Johnson-Bailey

Introduction

Adult women who return to college comprise the fastest growing segment of the college population. Since the 1970s women have been returning to college in record numbers. Statistics show these returning women represent 50% of all female college students (Schmittroth, 1995). They are different from the average student because of their age and needs. This group of students has been recognized as a phenomenon and has been designated "reentry" students. By definition, a reentry student is someone who either interrupted her college education for a period of five or more years or a woman who delayed entering college directly after high school and is currently attending college (Lewis, 1988).

Within this group are women of different races and cultures. Yet, if conclusions are drawn from the literature it could be assumed that this group is composed of generic learners who are White and whose concerns are similar across the group. However, such conclusions belie the large numbers of Black females who are included in the catch-all category of reentry students.

According to Evangelauf (1992), Black females (African American and women of African ancestry) comprise the largest number of students of color at the graduate and undergraduate level. Their numbers are twice that of the other groups of color and from this data it can be extrapolated that Black women comprise the largest group of reentry students of color. Yet, only two studies have been identified on reentry women that have included Black women as respondents (Demos, 1979; Kaplan, 1982). Neither of these studies recognized or reported any differences between the White female and Black female respondents or even conjectured that differences may exist. Yet many articles and studies report that the experiences of women and Blacks in higher education are different from those of White males (Briscoe & Ross, 1989; Fleming, 1984; Hall & Sandler, 1982; Moses, 1989). These studies document the discrimination experienced by Blacks and by women because of their race or gender.

Little literature could be found to address how a group that includes Blacks and women would be impacted by a double bias. Reentry Black women's participation in higher education is not explicitly apparent from

the literature. According to Bell-Scott (1984), research on Black women in higher education has been a subject that has been routinely ignored in educational studies. Agreeing with her, Ihle (1986) and Johnson-Bailey, Tisdell and Cervero (1994) observe that it is difficult to know what is occurring with Black women in higher education because major government and educational studies only report data by sex or race.

These two categories are considered the major designated minorities and no studies cross-reference the two databases. This results in a lack of statistics on Black reentry females in higher education. It is indeed one of the flaws of the literature that most studies have been done on middle-age, middle-class White women (Caffarella & Olson, 1993). Caffarella and Olson (1993) found this to be particularly inappropriate as educators have begun to make "generalizations" about reentry women based on the available data. In response to this problem Caffarella and Olson (1993) call for researchers to be less culturally confined when sampling.

Overview of the Study

The education literature does not document reentry Black women's learning experiences. An earlier study by this author (Johnson-Bailey, 1994) contributed to the educational theory and praxis by offering research specific to a particular group of learners, Black women, and thus assaulting the myth of the generic learner. The 1994 study demonstrated the marginality of Black women and set them forth as a group whose experiences are inclusive of many types of students because of the unique position of Black women as the embodiment of race, gender, class, and color issues. Surveying Black women was therefore seen to be an invaluable research measure. The research further indicated how classroom hierarchies and the hidden and covert curriculum negatively affected the educational tenures of reentry Black women. Finally, the study was significant because the research methodology of narrative analysis empowered the Black women to speak for themselves (Bell-Scott, 1994; Collins, 1990; Foster, 1996; Vaz, 1997).

This follow-up qualitative study, which is the topic of this chapter, focuses on specific retention and participation issues whereas the 1994

study examined classroom experiences. This latter research, in part, continues the examination of Black reentry women's educational experiences as learners. As well, it endeavors to isolate and study participation issues and to identify factors that contribute to successful educational tenures. Issues such as situational, psychological, and institutional barriers that are reported in the literature which routinely hinder reentry students are also examined (Pitts, 1992; Safman, 1988; Tittle & Denker, 1980).

Specifically studied were participation and retention factors. These factors affected Black reentry graduate and undergraduate women who were enrolled in four schools within the college of education at major research universities. This research focused on extracting common themes in the educational narratives of the respondents and on identifying factors that influenced or hindered participation and/or retention.

Method and Theoretical Framework

The researcher for this study is a Black woman and, therefore, this project was undertaken with a premise driven by an experiential base. The study's supposition acknowledges that Black women stand apart from other women and from men (even men of color) in their life experiences and concerns.

This study used Black feminist thought as the theoretical framework. It relied on an extensive body of writings (Collins, 1989, 1990; Davis, 1981; Giddings, 1984; hooks, 1984, 1989; Hull, Bell-Scott, & Smith, 1982; James & Busia, 1993; Lorde, 1984; Wallace, 1978). This literature posits that Black women have a collective consciousness that is based on the experience of living in a hierarchial society built on race, gender, and class. By definition, Black feminist thought is derived from Black feminism, a movement that addresses these issues. In addition, this framework draws upon a body of knowledge that sets forth the idea that the daily living of Black women has produced a collective consciousness that resists being defined as "less than," resists negative stereotyping, and instead seeks to define and empower its members by encouraging Black women to celebrate their survival. This unique perspective produces lives lived in opposition and resistance to societal hegemony. An epistemology

and suggested research method have resulted from Black feminist thought and it encourages the use of personal experience as a criterion with which to dialogue and judge knowledge (Collins, 1989).

Design of the Study

This was a qualitative study that used narrative analysis as the specific methodological instrument (Denzin, 1989; Etter-Lewis, 1993; Riessman, 1993). Narrative analysis as a method places emphasis on collecting the story of the participant, taking care to preserve the holistic nature of the participant's story. This technique emphasizes issues of primacy, linguistic integrity, and the cultural frameworks of the participants. A semi-structured interview format and an interview guide were used to direct data gathering. Interviews consisted of open-ended questions (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; 1998). Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed, and the resulting data that focused on the participants and their reasons for returning to and remaining in school were analyzed. Care was taken to avoid the introduction of race, gender, and class as topics. An additional source of data was the researcher's field notes which attended to nonverbal behaviors, the setting, and interpersonal issues (Spradley, 1980).

In keeping with the tradition of qualitative research, the data were analyzed to identify emerging themes (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 1987). This process involved a step-wise technique of finding commonalities throughout the women's stories. These commonalities represented numerous categories of meaning. The overlapping and interlocking nature of these categories made obvious the parameters of the emerging themes which formed the major findings in this study. Quotes were taken from the original transcripts and used liberally in this study to support the emerging themes. This assured that the participants' voices would be primary, thereby ensuring that the data would be rich and descriptive and present an accurate portrayal of the participants' realities.

The Sample

The sample consisted of ten Black women who were either attending or had recently matriculated from a college of education: 1) three had obtained undergraduate degrees; 2) two were pursuing and three had obtained master's degrees; 3) one was pursuing and two had obtained specialist's degrees; and 4) four were pursuing and one had obtained a doctor of education degree. The number of women in the sample seems to exceed ten respondents because several of the women obtained multiple degrees from the same institution. The researcher interviewed them about each of their reentry experiences. This was a purposeful sample (Merriam, 1998) and the selection criteria required 1) that the women self-identify as Black; 2) that the women be at least a year into their educational endeavor and no more than three years removed from it; 3) that respondents be involved in a formal higher education experience; and 4) that the women were at least twenty-five years of age. The women fit the traditional definition of reentry women (Lewis, 1988) in that they interrupted their college education for several years, delayed entering college directly after high school and were in the non-traditional age group.

The definition of reentry students that characterized them as women over twenty-five encompassed the belief that women in this age category would provide a reflective aspect to their interviews (Gilligan, 1982). The women were assigned pseudonyms (Eve, Sara, Maria, Johnnie, Lena, Amille, Faye, Denise, Jeanie, and Anne). The women ranged in age from twenty-eight to fifty-seven. The respondents were interviewed on one occasion with the interviews averaging an hour and a half to two hours. In addition shorter follow-up interviews were conducted by telephone to clarify participants' responses.

Findings

An analysis of the data revealed that three major issues affected the participation of the Black reentry women studied. These included: 1) the accessibility and encouragement of the department's graduate coordinator and/or representative; 2) the recruitment to the program by students who

had participated in the program; and 3) the encouragement of mentors (Black college career counselors or Black professors who were familiar with the program). Further examination disclosed that four issues affected retention among the respondents and included: 1) the presence of and mentoring by Black professors and staff; 2) the presence of and networking by Black peers; 3) respect from the department's professoriate; and 4) the availability of continued funding. Each of the findings is briefly discussed in the following sections and accompanied by supporting data.

Participation

A detailed examination of the participation issues showed striking similarities among the respondents' experiences in the areas of accessibility and encouragement by graduate coordinators, recruitment by other students, and mentors.

Accessibility and encouragement by graduate coordinators. Two of the women related incidents where they approached graduate coordinators in other colleges. These representatives actively discouraged their application to graduate school. One woman, Lena, a forty-eight-year-old, recalled that for several months she did not hear from the graduate coordinator who represented the program to which she had applied. She made an appointment to see the graduate coordinator who informed her that her application had not left his desk because he did not feel that she was "graduate school material." Lena recalled slowly and with stumbling speech:

> The rejection held me back for years and years. I was afraid to try. It was just traumatic. So from 1978 up until 1996 I waited. I wanted to be in graduate school. I said there has to be a place for me. My job had gotten to the place where the challenges weren't there anymore. I had maxed out on the job with my previous education and work experience. I was determined to go to graduate school. I thought I was capable...I had to find out.

Eighteen years passed before she found the courage to reapply to graduate school. This time she applied to a different college within the same university. She has now graduated with her master's degree. Her master's project received recognition by a nationally recognized foundation interested in adopting her plan for forming grassroots community programs staffed by low income women.

A second respondent, Amille, a forty-four-year-old, recalled that she visited a graduate department to get an application. The head of the department and the graduate coordinator refused to give her an application or any information on the program. She recalled the director's exact words: "If you were really serious about school you would be willing to quit your job and attend full-time. We only take serious students." They did not accept her explanation, that she needed to continue working and she was prepared to commute the 100 miles to school twice a week. As Amille sat there in the office, she explained that at first she didn't think they were serious. She finally realized they were earnest because she was not being walked around the building for a tour of the facilities as she had expected. She was being walked to the outside door. A period of two years elapsed before a friend told her about a different atmosphere in her department in the college of education. She was told by her friend that the idea of Blacks in education seemed more "palatable." She had "mistakenly" applied to the non-traditional area of journalism, an area that she has since learned historically does not grant doctorates to a significant number of Blacks. Statistics do support her friend's conclusions that Blacks (women and men) receive more advanced degrees in education than in any other area (Evanangelauf, 1992). She applied to the education program that her friend assured her would be friendlier toward a nontraditional Black woman. She has since earned her doctorate.

Five of the women stated that it was the friendliness and encouragement of the graduate coordinators in the programs to which they applied that really determined whether or not they would participate. Faye recalled that she was given a lecture by the graduate coordinator of one major research institution. He told her that he expected her to try hard to succeed, since most of the Blacks who entered the program just couldn't seem to finish. "I'll be watching you," he said. According to her:

> I walked out the reception area and never looked back. I knew that the deck was stacked against me there. I found a more receptive program at another institution where the keeper of the gate (the graduate coordinator) did not have a ready-made stereotype in his mind about me—somewhere where they didn't expect me to fail.

Faye completed her specialist degree at this institution. Since this study was conducted in the summer of 1996, she has gone on to complete a doctorate at another institution and is now a school superintendent for a small rural school district.

Five of the ten women in this study felt it was the friendliness and/or acceptance of the graduate coordinator that greatly influenced their choice of programs. One of the participants, a thirty-eight-year old nurse, Maria, said the application process was difficult and that when the graduate coordinator, a White male, heard the uncertainty in her voice, he told her not to worry because he'd step her through the process. Recalling that it was not that the application was difficult to complete, Maria said: "It was just the idea of making such a big step...committing so much time...the driving...leaving behind my family. It was intimidating."

With the exception of one respondent, all described a tentativeness about applying to the university because of stories they had heard regarding the inherent unfairness toward Black students at most major research universities. One respondent, Johnnie, who grew up in the local area in the proximity of the university she chose, had originally attended an out-of-town college because of the stories she had heard. After dropping out of school several times she finally decided to come to the major research university in her hometown:

> I decided it was convenient. It was on the bus line. I didn't have a car...Scores were not the problem. I had been in the gifted program since fourth grade. My GREs were high... So I did my master's and specialist degrees back-to-back in math. But it was a very biased place—exceptionally biased. So I decided to try a different department. If I could find an okay environment, I'd do my doctorate.

She found just such a program where there seemed to be a "welcome sign." She thrived in her new program, became a graduate assistant, and graduated with her doctorate.

Recruitment by other students. Four of the respondents were recruited to their various programs by other students, two by White students and two by Black students. The difference in the recruiting experiences was that the Black students warned of campus racism but still judged the academic experience as excellent and the task as achievable. Eve said that she got the "inside scoop" but decided to come anyway:

> I heard a lot of things about this place before I came—observations of people at my church and their people. And in fact, a girl who moved here with her husband (he was a student at the university) had a lot of negative things to say about the way Black people were treated.

Mentoring. Two other women were encouraged by their mentors to attend. Denise attributed her participation to a Black female professor who mentored her through the application process. The professor, who had directed Denise in her master's program, told Denise she needed to pursue her doctorate elsewhere because it would give her a well-rounded program. Not only did she encourage her to apply to her present university, but she helped her with the application and provided letters of recommendation. Denise said: "Of the places I wrote to, I got a letter back from my present institution. They even offered me an assistantship. So here I am." The remaining women applied based on the academic reputations of the programs.

In summarizing participation, the reasons these women participated in their graduate and undergraduate programs do not support the concerns set forth in the literature as being factors that influence reentry women's participation. Most research lists such variables as marriage, children, past successful school participation, and family background as strong indicators of future school participation (Anderson & Darkenwald, 1979; Carp, Peterson & Roelfs, 1974; Cross, 1981; Johnstone & Rivera, 1965; Teachman & Paasch, 1989). The women in this study did not offer any of these indicators as having influenced their participation. With the exception of three women in the study, all of the women (seven) were first-

generation college students. All of the women told of school experiences that had negatively impacted their opinions of higher education. One woman summarized her difficulties succinctly: "Hey, it's just about being Black. It's a hard row to hoe." The participants were evenly divided between women who were married and/or divorced with children and women who were single. Child care, family and career responsibilities were not offered by the women as reasons that affected their decisions to participate in school. If the traditional indicators set forth by the literature were applied to this study group, none of them would have been in school. The participants had decided to enter higher education regardless of past school failures and lack of family support.

Retention

This study revealed four issues that impacted the Black women relative to their continued stays in higher education: 1) the presence of and mentoring by Black professors and staff; 2) the presence of and networking with Black peers; 3) respect from the department's professoriate; and 4) the availability of continued funding. These issues will be examined in the order of importance ascribed to them by the ten women who participated in this study.

The concept of mentoring was presented in many guises by the women: "I just needed someone to tell me if my writing was up to par," "I'd get turned around in the library and no one would show me the ropes," or "Whenever I visited the department I'd see that the other students had personal relationships with the professors—'cause they'd be in their offices, or standing in the hall talking and stuff."

A major difference for all the participants was the presence of Black professors, particularly Black women professors. All the students used similar wording such as "having someone around who looks like me."

The women thought of graduate school not as the most difficult assignment they'd undertaken, but possibly the most foreign one. They needed someone to introduce them to and someone to help them negotiate the new rules. Examples abounded of how the lack of "real knowledge, not the stuff in the student handbook" made a difference in success.

Encouragement of mentors. All of the respondents spoke of the importance of professors who were accepting of student diversity and of professors who respected their contributions. Accordingly, it was these professors (a small number in most of the departments studied), who helped the students continue their programs. Their classrooms were described as "havens" and "respites." Maria addressed mentoring frequently throughout her interview. She explained that Black students are not usually mentored:

> I didn't know what mentoring was until it happened to me. It's like I didn't know that grad school could mean so much until now. My experiences are so different. I'm receiving all of this help...Academia is set up as a game. I didn't know the rules. They change the rules all the time. And most of the time I was losing. It seems to me that if you're mentored you don't have to play. Somebody else will say, 'Okay this is the game. Step here. Don't step there.' It frees me up to learn—to study.

Maria was mentored by two professors, a Black woman and a White man. She felt that each offers her something invaluable that the other cannot. This belief is repeated by Amille who felt that advising within and across cultures were different matters: "There are things that my women mentors tell me that my male mentor would never dare to address—like how to dress for a conference." Another one of the women, Lena, said that all the professors who helped her had been women, mostly Black and a few White. She said she "valued professors" who had sensed her needs and stepped forward to help her.

More often than not, what the students described as "just having a personal relationship" with a professor was important to arbitrating higher education. For instance Sara described her best experience in her program:

> Being in this Black professor's class has been worth all the money that I've paid for grad school. And being Black is kind of, you know, we just don't have these affirming experiences every day. If I don't take another class, this has been worth it, to get to this point in my

> life. I'm in a class with a Black woman professor and four other Black women. I'm being constantly affirmed and supported.

She expressed a sentiment that seven of the women who had Black professors also communicated. It became a matter of an empathetic understanding between the student and professor--not preferential treatment.

Five of the ten women interviewed had research opportunities extended to them by the Black professors in their departments, and two of the participants had similar invitations made by White professors. Given that the women were students at predominantly White universities in departments of ten or more professors where only one professor was Black, this information seems discouraging in two areas. There are not enough Black professors to adequately accommodate every Black student who might need help and opportunities, and it seems as if interactions between White professors and Black students are woefully inadequate.

In addition to getting help from Black professors and White professors who were clearly allies, three of the women, Johnnie, Anne, and Amille, related stories of Black women secretaries who played important roles in helping them succeed. According to Anne:

> We had this Black office administrator in our department. And she pretty much took me to the side sometimes to say you know this is this, this is that, and these are the ropes. This is who you stay away from.

Anne felt that the Black secretary in her department was part of an invisible and unacknowledged network that has provided assistance to many Black students.

Support by Black peers. Eight of the women reported receiving tenure-sustaining information from the network established by Black students (especially Black graduate assistants). It was their opinion that the information given to them would not have been obtained from other sources. This was particularly relevant when applying for graduate assistantships and financial aid. While four of the respondents had graduate assistantships, none of them received them in their first year, and they

made application only after receiving information and support from the previously referenced sources.

Amille offered this story of how she was first introduced to the "real" knowledge:

> Advisement, or should I say mis-advisement, 'does in' many a Black student. In my first quarter my advisor tried to enroll me in statistics and the department's most difficult subject matter course. A Black woman who was one year into the program [she'd met her the first night of class] told me I didn't have a choice about the departmental course but to get the heck out of stats. She said 'it's not the kind of course you take alone. You take it with a buddy. It's meant to wash you out of school.'

She followed her new friend's advice, postponing statistics until later. Amille feels that if she had followed her advisor's wishes, she would have dropped out that first quarter. Using very similar words, several of the women talked about this mis-advisement or how the lack of interest in helping them negotiate academic waters appeared be a non-aggressive measure that negatively affected their ability to stay in school. The respondents believed that a lot of people faltered because they were misadvised. According to the women interviewed, that is where other students play a significant role. Students have the time and the opportunity to talk to other students. Professors, it was felt, no matter how concerned, are thoroughly enmeshed in their research. For these women, the designated agents of the valued information were the graduate assistants. Eve, who had been a graduate assistant for two years, knew that this was her job:

> If there are Black students, I try to make an effort to contact them, to talk to them. I try to do this the first few days of classes. I go over to them and introduce myself and tell them that if they ever need anything...

However, Johnnie's approach is more direct: "We have a support group where we meet. I actually bring forms and help students plan the pro-

grams of study they're gonna run past their majors." She felt that the students needed to be proactive about knowing what and who to take in order to get through the system.

Most student interactions centered on helping each other and could be classified as psychological support and academic support. Anne and Maria tell similar stories of struggling through classes where other Black students provided them with a lifeline. Anne reported:

> There was this math class where the teacher would give us work on Monday and we would have to turn it in on Friday. It was just so hard. I'd never had a class that was so hard in my life. I would try to talk to the professor about what to do and he would give me vague answers. I tried getting help from other students in the class that I knew and they really shut me out—even those in my department. There were two Black doctoral students who took me aside and said, "Hey, don't work by yourself. You work in a group." We would spend four or five hours in the library on Saturdays working together.

Denise felt that it was the only way she could have survived the math class.

"When I'm drowning," said Maria, "I call my Black girl friends." Expanding on this concept, Lena adds:

> I like students who are like me. Female. African American. I like that because we can relate similar experiences. I have White friends, but it's not the same.

In chorus with Lena, Johnnie told a story of exclusion and affirmation:

> In some classes, early on, when I was the only Black student, I had trouble. People wouldn't eat with me at break or they wouldn't want to sit by me, or when we'd pair up in groups nobody really wanted to be my partner. It was sort of like being the odd man out. Lately I've been having more classes with African American women, so my in-

teractions have been different. The other Black women are a support. They even call me after class. They tell me how wonderful I'm doing with my research.

Institutional support. Although closely related to mentoring, this theme seemed independent in the dialogue of the women interviewed. The students continuously questioned whether their work was as good as that of White students. Even when they felt confident about their ability, given high GRE scores, the daily classroom interactions seemed to undermine their confidence. As a result, having their work respected and acknowledged as worthwhile took on great importance to the students. Johnnie told of her dilemma:

> There always seemed to be a question about why I was here—about my competency. When I first got here I thought I was graduate school material. I'd been in gifted programs since grade school. I thought I could handle it. I thought I was a smart little whippersnapper. But over the course of the first few quarters I thought that I wasn't smart. I kept trying to justify, rationalize why I got B's and what was happening to me. Finally, this Black woman professor recognized my work. She called it to the attention of others, who agreed. I felt really good.

Sara, too, had a professor recognize her worth at a crucial moment. She remembered that it was finals time and she could not get the paper written. She went to her professor, a White woman, and attempted to explain her writing block. To her surprise the woman believed in her competence and had her record her final paper on tape.

Such recognition of their work was a direct contrast to what the majority of the women felt. They reported that their classmates were routinely suspicious of how they got into higher education and questioned if it was through "affirmative action or the developmental studies track."

Funding. All the women in the study began their higher education careers without any type of financial assistance. Although four eventually became graduate assistants, which included tuition assistance and work study, six of the remaining women were self-supporting. Of that number,

four talked of having to struggle with finances and of adjusting their course loads to correspond with their finances.

Ingenious methods of continuing school were found by some of the participants. Three of the participants were helped the old-fashioned way: parents, departmental funding, and scholarships. Amille figured out that if she took an overload she was not charged full price for the third and fourth courses. She accelerated her program of study in an effort to complete school before her savings were depleted. Sara, on the other hand, had understanding parents:

> Finances are hard. My parents help. They pay my tuition. My mother said that she's never had to spend any bad money. You know, to get anybody out of jail or out of trouble. And so she says, "As long as you want to go to school I'll pay." But I'm lucky. Both of my parents finished college. They understand.

Eve received help from her advisor, who helped her get a graduate assistantship when she realized Eve was grappling with finances. Similarly, when Maria decided to drop out because she didn't have the money to continue, a White woman professor who overheard the conversation intervened with a helping hand. She recalled:

> We were at the dinner table (during class break) and I was talking to another student about not taking the next class. I couldn't afford to come black to class. Christmas was coming and the kids wanted a lot of stuff. I made up all kinds of excuses. The bottom line was the money wasn't there. She said, "Oh no, if you're not going to come back because of money, let me tell you where some money is. If you're not going to come back because you're tired and you need a break, and it's for your psyche, then that's a different thing. You have to do what's best for you." And the department found the money for two quarters.

In summarizing retention, four factors emerged as significant themes: mentoring, networking, institutional support, and funding. While these issues have been seen in other studies as peripherally influencing

the process of retention, they emerged in this study as primary factors. It can be concluded that their importance in the academic lives of the women in this sample is due to the fact that these women's experiences are framed differently by society. For example, the women related that traditional mentoring approaches were not usually applicable to them since cultural issues often skew the mentor-mentee relationship, which is normed on White middle-class male interactions. A second supporting reason concerned the student network, institutional support, and funding issues. Such matters are impacted by the amount of formal and informal information that is transmitted to students from other students and from institutional representatives (which might include graduate coordinators, admissions personnel, professors, etc.). The significance of who talks to whom and what information is communicated (networking), and how students are encouraged or discouraged through access to information (institutional support and funding) significantly influenced retention for the Black reentry women in this study.

Discussion

Adult education literature frequently attends to issues of retention and participation from two perspectives: who participates, and why they participate. Encompassed in these approaches are various statistics on how group membership is represented and how situational, dispositional, and psychological barriers affect participation and retention. However, what is missing from the literature is any broad-base discussion on how race and gender, on a separate basis or as interlocking variables on the societal and personal level, affect a student's decision to participate and to remain in adult education.

It is set forth in adult education literature that the educational level of the family of origin, the participant's socioeconomic background, marriage, past school success, and career goals are strong predictors of who will participate in adult education (Anderson & Darkenwald, 1979; Carp, Peterson & Roelfs, 1974; Cross, 1981; Johnstone & Rivera, 1965; Teachman & Paasch, 1989). Regarding retention, research posits that students on a personal level are discouraged by barriers that affect their at-

tendance, such as daytime class scheduling that is problematic for working adults, negative classroom interactions that can adversely impact the non-traditional student who is often struggling with self-doubt, and family responsibilities that can include childcare issues, finances, and emotional support (Lewis, 1988). These factors identified as affecting retention are cast as individualistic in nature and not group-specific.

Yet, in this study, issues that impacted participation and retention, such as scheduling, child care, marriage, and the family's educational history were never mentioned by the participants as they told why they decided as adults to pursue and persist in their educational endeavors. When these issues were raised by the researcher, they were identified as secondary concerns when compared to the societal constraints that followed them into academe. Indeed, in using a hierarchy to order the participants' problems, it seems that broader societal concerns framed their participation and retention issues.

The study revealed that the barriers that usually affect reentry women's participation, such as child care, class scheduling, lack of family support, financial difficulties, and past school failure, were not mentioned by these women as concerns. Follow-up questions prompted by the knowledge of factors presented in the literature precipitated dialogue on these issues. The main factors that attributed to the participation of the women studied were accepting environments (which included helpful and positive graduate school coordinators), recruitment by other students, encouragement by mentors familiar with the department's program, and atmosphere. These findings are inconsistent with existing literature on the generic reentry student (Cross, 1981; Lewis, 1988; Tittle & Denker, 1980).

The most important factors affecting the retention of Black students were the presence and mentoring of Black faculty and staff, the presence of Black peers and the resulting network, the positive attitude of some department faculty, and the location of new sources of funding. These findings agree with existing literature on non-traditional students, particularly African Americans and women (Adams, 1992; Bowser, Auletta & Jones, 1993; Daloz, 1986; Hill, 1972; Johnson Bailey, Tisdell, & Cervero, 1994; Steele, 1991).

As significant as the factors that were positive in the experiences of the women studied were the negative factors that impacted the reentry of these women. Three factors were identified by the students as particularly problematic: 1) a lack of inclusive campus activities; 2) intentional exclusion from the department's formal and informal networks (i.e., student study groups, research projects, publication opportunities, and social activities); and 3) mis-advisement by disinterested advisors.

An analysis of the data regarding retention revealed that throughout their programs the participants struggled with feelings of isolation and self-doubt that were particularly apparent in classroom interactions. According to them, these issues more than any others challenged their ability to remain in school. All of the women in the study said that they reached points in their school tenure when they had to decide if they could or wanted to continue. Amille phrased her dilemma as follows:

> There just came a day when I had to ask myself, "Why am I here? Is it worth it? Hardly anyone talks to me. I know most of them [students and teachers] don't think I'm as smart as they are. They don't think I earned my place here. Maybe they don't even like me. Do I have to take this crap?" There was a long psychological silence—lots of tears. Then I remembered that I was here for myself, for my Mama, for my daughter, but mostly for myself. I remembered my mother's words, "Education is the one thing they [Whites] can't take from you. Get as much as you can get." And so I hit that proverbial wall and climbed it. I persisted.

The students characterized their forays into academia as precarious. But Maria's poignant statement summarizes the feelings of the majority of the participants: "I got in. That's not always easy. That's the hard part. I'm staying." However, statistics show that the dropout rate for minorities overall (African Americans and Latinos) is higher than the dropout rate of Whites who enroll in higher education (U.S. Government Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, 1990). A few students said that their professors referred to them as "exceptions" to their race in terms of intelligence and performance. The professors felt that such assertions were compliments. The students receiving them did not. Other students said

that they had their presence questioned. Denise recalled being asked in a class by another student if she possibly had been an affirmative action admission. Such blatant non-affirming classroom experiences, which the women described as non-routine, weighed heavily on their ambivalence about persisting in the higher education environment. However, it must be noted that this study focused only on women who were persisters, since the women being interviewed were currently enrolled in or had completed graduate or undergraduate school.

The issue of remaining in school and doing battle with the establishment presented itself as an early moment of truth in Lena's school career. She remembered being told that if she wished to be successful in graduate school she should find an editor because her grammar, while understandably inferior, was not acceptable. She was told on another occasion by the same White woman professor, "You talk White but you write Black." Lena declared half jokingly that she never really knew what that meant. However, through trial and error and what several of the participants referred to as the Black student network, Lena found out which professors were helpful and how to adapt her writing to please different professors. She said that one White male professor was the "lifeline" she needed. She attributes his encouragement as a major factor that kept her in the program:

> I had heard of his work. He is a person who is concerned and who will look after you...He was a friendly advisor who would not let you get overloaded or misdirected.

Summary

The earlier study by this researcher showed the experiences of Black reentry women to be different on many levels from those of other reentry women. This parallels the differences found in other areas of their lives. Whereas the first study highlighted classroom events, this latter study focused on retention and participation.

A significant lesson related by this study is that the societal issues that occurred in participants' lives outside of academia also followed

them to college. This study does not attempt to discount the variables found in earlier studies that used White reentry women as participants, nor does it contend that the findings from these studies are not applicable to the women in this study. It does, however, set forth that the issues for these women, as suggested by the earlier studies, are different and exist in the long shadow cast by a society driven by race, gender, and class hierarchies. The Black women who are involved in higher education defy the odds by succeeding in the face of confines that impact the women on issues of race, gender, and class. Black women in higher education have escaped the cultural coping mechanisms of rejecting educational achievement as being a White norm (Ogbu, 1992) and have endeavored to learn. They have done this despite psychological and dispositional barriers (Cross, 1981). This study of their educational narratives regarding specific participation and retention issues provides possible answers to why and how certain members of one under-represented group participate and persist in a particular educational setting.

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Methods for Developing Literacy in Urban Community Colleges

Carol S. Chadwick

Introduction

Literary critics and educational researchers have much to offer classroom teachers, particularly those who work with inner-city community college students. Well-tested suggestions for enhancing students' reading of both expository and narrative material is readily available. However, recent critical and experimental insights into the nature and experience of various types of reading material, and suggestions as to how teachers can use this information rarely have found their way into methods books. Particularly in urban areas, the burgeoning numbers of community colleges and their ever-increasing educational significance prompts consideration of the unique characteristics and needs of such students and the pedagogical challenges of their instructors. In this paper I will first consider some of the unique characteristics of inner-city community college instructors and students. I will then make suggestions about helping these students adopt a positive approach toward reading and recognizing both narrative and expository forms. Finally, I will offer several analytic devices that instructors can use based on specific contributions of reader-response literary critics and experimental educational researchers.

In spite of some notable interdisciplinary efforts over the past several years, there has traditionally been little communication between the two disciplines of literary criticism and empirical educational research (Klein, 1990). There are many reasons for this. The two fields do not attract the same kind of scholars, literary criticism being highly theoretical and educational research having very pragmatic goals. People from these disciplines generally do not read each other's publications. Both literatures demand specialized background, vocabulary and reading comprehension skills. Relatively few individuals are equipped to read equally well in both disciplines, yet people from each discipline could find very helpful information in the other's literature. The theory behind reader-response literary criticism combined with the findings of empirical educational research can make instructors aware and appreciative of the extreme complexity of the reading process. Also, it can equip them for the job of helping students get the most out of available texts. It is unfortunate, then, that this

wealth of information is not used more by classroom teachers. Possibly here we can bring together the findings from the two disciplines and generate ideas that can help inner-city community college instructors enable students to face the challenges of reading both inside and outside the classroom.

First, let us consider some of the unique characteristics of inner-city community college instructors and their students. In view of the fact that most states have more community colleges than universities, it is important to consider the characteristics of the kinds of people who are attracted to these institutions as students or teachers, since teaching methods must be relevant to the background of both instructors and students.

General Characteristics

Community College Instructors

What should be involved in the general training of inner-city community college instructors is a tantalizing subject for the reading specialist, and is central to the controversial issue of content area reading instruction. The amount of training in reading instruction, as well as sensitivity to and understanding of the problems associated with reading, can vary widely among community college instructors.

Full-time inner-city community college instructors come primarily from two sources: secondary public education and private business and industry. The first group includes former high school teachers with master's degrees and sometimes doctorates, who, for any number of reasons, find the life of a community college instructor more desirable than that of a high school teacher. The second group consists of professionals from specialized fields such as law or business, or highly skilled technicians from various vocational areas. Members of both groups are usually people who like working with young adults and enjoy the flexible hours of teaching on the community college level. Such people generally are not career scholars like those who seek positions at universities. In addition to these instructors, many community colleges and universities are staffed with a large number of part-time and adjuncts instructors, some of whom

teach classes at several different institutions. In spite of their qualifications and dedication, they are burdened with a myriad of problems: exhausting schedules caused by commuting from school to school, the absence of office and conference space, last-minute teaching assignments, and inadequate information about syllabi, text books, clerical support, and so forth.

In any case, it is unlikely that many full or part-time community college instructors are readers of literary criticism or educational research, or have the content area reading skills to do so. Furthermore, the reading habits, tastes and backgrounds of such instructors can be very different from those of university professors who write literary criticism or conduct and report on educational research. Hence, many of the references and/or allusions made by literary critics are meaningless to community college instructors. At the same time, the backgrounds of inner-city community college instructors are often quite different from those of the students as well, placing the instructors in the middle between those who produce theory and background information and those to whom it is to be applied.

In view of this, it is unfortunate that few institutions of higher learning offer instruction in pedagogy specifically for community college instructors, much less inner-city ones. Aside from radical educational theorists such as Paolo Friere, Henry Giroux, and others, and vocational education theorists such as those who contributed to Johnson's *Reading and the Adult Learner* (1980), there seems to be little movement to confront those matters and problems that are unique to the inner-city learner.

Training of inner-city community college instructors calls for interdisciplinarity, which, as Klein (1990) demonstrates, can be fraught with difficulties. She observes that currently there are attempts "to reintegrate the humanities through linguistic, rhetorical, semiotic, and hermeneutic theories" (p. 33). She also makes it clear that such attempts at integration are difficult. Cross-disciplinary cooperation often fails because members of different disciplines have unique, and sometimes conflicting, styles of working and thinking.

To demonstrate the difficulty of interdisciplinarity, a case in point is the reading of literary criticism and empirical educational research. The literature of each discipline, though expository in both cases, has characteristic features of vocabulary and organization. This, combined with tacit

assumptions, attitudes, and background knowledge requirements, makes reading extremely difficult for the uninitiated. In subtle ways, graduate level classes and seminars are in themselves reading classes where the students are their own teachers and their peers and colleagues are sounding boards for trial interpretations. A relatively small number of students work through graduate programs that necessitate advanced reading in more than one discipline. Therefore, it is no wonder that few are competent multidisciplinary readers. Instructors who have fresh recall of learning to read unfamiliar content material, especially when under pressure to complete certification requirements or graduate studies, might experience increased empathy for struggling students in comparable circumstances with fewer resources. The complexity of the learning problems of those at the community college level and the widespread ramifications of society's failure to solve them demand the attention of those who are most highly skilled and knowledgeable.

Equally important are the factors that set inner-city community college students apart from traditional university students. Unless these characteristics are faced squarely, inner city community college instructors, especially those who are at entry level, may have distorted or unrealistic expectations of their students. These factors should be addressed when lessons and assignments are planned.

Community College Students

Information gathered from J. Bolden, Director of Academic Support Programs at Wayne County Community College shows that the average age of a freshman English student is 33.56 (Wayne County Community College, 1991). Also, Bolden shows that an analysis of ASSET results, an ACT standardized placement instrument, indicates the median reading skills scores of entering freshman would recommend placement in English 101, a developmental reading class. This class is designed for students with reading abilities on the seventh- through ninth-grade reading levels. An average age of 33 or 34 combined with a median reading level of seventh grade sets these inner-city community college students apart

from traditional university freshmen and sophomores, and has substantial bearing on how community college instructor do their jobs.

Experience at Wayne County Community College suggests that the majority of students are mature adults with families and households to maintain. On observing representative day and night classes there, one sees that the majority of students attending day classes are women. It is often revealed during class discussion that these women are single heads of households with dependent children. The children either attend school while their mothers are in class themselves, or are placed in day-care centers or with baby sitters or relatives. Additionally, many students have full- or part-time jobs. In night classes, there is a fairly even distribution of men and women, most of whom are employed at full-time jobs during the day and have family and household responsibilities. Many do not have reliable transportation and must use public transportation or share rides. Added to this, students often suffer from personal and family health problems, poor or nonexistent study skills and habits, limited informational resources, lack of privacy or solitude for study, absence of family and peer support, and all the other burdens associated with being a low-income first-year college student.

Due to a lack of monetary resources, many students at inner-city community colleges are receiving some sort of financial assistance. Despite the low cost of tuition, approximately one third of all students at Wayne County Community College, including those enrolled in only one class, receive financial aid (M. J. Bond, Associate Dean of Student Services, Wayne County Community College, personal communication, April 10, 1998). In fact, the promise of such aid can be a powerful inducement in recruiting and retaining students. Often, financial assistance grants stipulate that students carry a full load of classes and maintain a minimum grade point average of C. This can pressure students to focus more on the grade than on the amount of learning it reflects, and to take more classes than they can handle. Financial subsidies are often sought by a learning institution because they bring needed revenue in matching funds, even though the demands made on students to maintain the financial assistance are sometimes counter-productive. All in all, inner-city community college students often must contend with a wide array of problems and complications, sometimes referred to as "the burdens of poverty." A middle-

class teacher must be familiar with these students' lives when planning lessons and giving assignments. Teachers cannot expect that students have conditions at home that can make completing homework assignments probable or even possible. Middle-class teachers cannot assume that the learning conditions they came to take for granted while going to school are the same for their students.

Attitudes and Abilities

Before inner-city community college instructors begin to teach, they might need to examine their motives and aspirations. Do they want to profess a particular subject or teach students? Both cannot be given equal priority. If inner-city community college instructors place subject matter before students, professors cannot be effective. If they really want to teach at a university or prestigious institution attended by students equipped with rich backgrounds and superior skills, they ought to be making every effort to do just that. If this is not possible, for any reason, then teachers must face reality and meet the needs of those they intend to serve. A median student reading level of seventh grade can be shocking (Report H9602). Implicit in this statistic is the fact that for every student reading above seventh grade level there is another reading below it for whom instructors must be prepared. Illiterate and learning-disabled students can often attend classes because the college has open-door policies that make it possible for anyone over age 18 to register, regardless of previous academic record. There are no entrance exams, only diagnostic placement tests. Consequently, inner-city community colleges can and do accept students who might not be admitted to other colleges or universities. Therefore, the range of ability levels instructors can encounter in any given class could be considerable and could also vary greatly from class to class. It is wise for instructors to assess the abilities of students in a particular class at the onset of the semester. Unfortunately, in many post-secondary learning institutions like Wayne County Community College, there is no lock-out; that is, students testing at low ability levels cannot be forced to take developmental classes. Hence, in many community colleges, particularly those with open-door policies, it is not uncommon for students

with elementary-level basic skills to be enrolled in non-developmental classes as well as developmental classes.

Preliminary Considerations

One way instructors can determine ability levels is to utilize any evaluative test results the institution might have on record. Standardized test results that give scores in grade-level equivalents have been discredited as not having any value in experimental research, and in some cases the data have been abused. Used prudently, however, diagnostic tests can shed light on where a student stands in relation to traditional learners and can indicate what can be expected in terms of basic skills.

Standardized tests are usually given during registration or orientation in an attempt to locate those students needing developmental help. If general skills levels of students in a particular class are known, instructors are in a favorable position to plan lessons and select a reading text that the majority of students can handle. If a specified text must be used, knowing the general skills level of the class can tell instructors to what extent and how the prescribed text meets the reading abilities of the students.

In the last several years, readability formulas and other informal techniques for determining the reading level of a certain text have, like standardized test results, fallen into disfavor among reading experts, primarily because they have been misused and misapplied. However, they can give instructors a general idea of the level of difficulty of a particular textbook. This in turn can help determine how much disparity, if any, there is between the basic skill levels of the students and the material they are working with. If a book is too difficult, the students will not read it. Students rarely have any say in text selection; it is the instructor's responsibility to obtain suitable books for the students or make adaptations through supplementary handouts, study guides, and so forth. If this is not possible, it might be best to abandon the text.

Another way the instructor can gain insight into reading ability and preferences is to survey what students have read and would recommend to their peers. Such a study could reflect the type and level of reading students find comfortable. One such helpful instrument is Stanovich and

West's (1989) questionnaire, which was a part of a study measuring print exposure among college students. They devised an instrument they called their Author Recognition Test, which measured students' ability to recognize the names of several famous authors. They found that this test was "a remarkably robust and independent predictor of word processing ability" (p. 402). Used as is with permission, or as a model for a similar teacher-designed instrument, this device could help instructors learn what students can and like to read. A teacher might also use a questionnaire similar to one I created to determine the reading habits and preferences of students (see Appendix A). Information from these instruments can aid in the selection of texts that have a greater likelihood of being read than those picked without student abilities and preferences in mind.

Teachers of learning-disabled and developmental students have long known that when textbooks are selected without consideration for reader interest or readability, they often go unread. Some inner-city community college instructors might need to be reminded of this. Researchers observe that students sometimes join class discussions of literary texts they have not read, making comments in response to other students' remarks rather than addressing the text directly. Some community college instructors assert that this is a common practice that occurs when texts are too difficult for the students, when the students believe the texts hold no interest for them, or when students do not make a practice of reading any books, newspapers or magazines. "Faking it" can make a student appear to be actively engaged with an assigned text without truly being so. Some non-readers or illiterates have highly developed skills for making themselves appear to be literate so they do not have to admit to a disability of which they are ashamed. Unless students are asked to respond in writing in the absence of any prior discussion, instructors may have no idea that certain students engaged in class discussion have not done the reading.

To prevent artificial responses, instructors can assign only material that the students can and will read, even if it is not what is traditionally considered to be college level material. Since what students might read and prefer may not be what the teachers would select, instructors might have to become familiar with what they consider "junk reading" in order to relate to students in regard to texts. In terms of social values, ideology and taste, this reading can be quite enlightening for middle-class instruc-

tors. However, instructors might first have to confront the fact that some inner-city community college students are habitual non-readers and, hence, their first challenge might be to get students to read any books at all.

One way to encourage students to develop a positive attitude about reading might be to form book discussion groups or to structure literature classes around a book-discussion format. Rachel Jacobsohn, author of *The Reading Guide Handbook* (1994), estimates that presently in America there are 400,000 book discussion groups or reading lists (Berman, 1994). These clubs usually meet at regular intervals to discuss specific books. Recently, *Time Magazine* reported Oprah Winfrey's promotion on her television program of her own monthly reading selections and her monthly discussion group (Gray, 1996). Whether large-scale or small, many book clubs operate privately and informally, not as an official part of any college or other learning institution. Participating, members receive no educational credit or reward other than the pleasure of sharing responses and interpretations with members of a convivial group. These groups meet in such diverse places as churches, neighborhood centers, libraries, book stores or people's homes. Refreshments may or may not be served. The groups range in formality from leaderless ones that decide at the end of each session what they will read and discuss next, with no overall agenda or theme, to actual classes with a paid discussion leader, a pre-planned syllabus, and guest lecturers. Some groups meet to discuss only a certain kind of literature such as detective novels, feminist writings, African-American works, and so on. What is missing in all, however, are tests or papers to write.

In inner-city community college literature classes there might be a greater likelihood of students actually reading the assigned selections if instructors build a syllabus around a few carefully chosen novels from popular literature such as romances, mysteries, biographies, or science fiction. When people read full-length novels, rather than sections of longer works or short stories, they are actively engaged and engrossed in the reading process over extended periods of time. The cognitive schemata that become activated at the onset of reading are sustained and, it would seem, the longer the brain can be consistently engaged in the reading process, the better. This would seem to result in an aerobic-like

effect on brain activity. Even when a person has put down a novel and returns to it at a later point, those schemata that were previously activated immediately come into play again. The challenge in setting up such a novel reading program would be to find a suitable number of well-written, interesting paperback works that could be obtained in sufficient quantity, quickly and easily. Sometimes, due to departmental regulations concerning class standardization and funding, instructors must submit requests for books and other materials up to a year in advance of the actual class meetings. The advantages of greater flexibility in book selection would be a freshness and timeliness of topic, readability, and high interest.

Besides reading ability and interests, it is very important that inner-city community college instructors have a clear picture of the kind of students they teach in terms of learning resources and life-style. Such knowledge can bear on the feasibility of assigning homework. One way an instructor can gain insight into students' learning situations and be helpful at the same time would be to ask each student to prepare a time plan and then go over it with the student in a brief conference. Often, when one makes out a time plan, periods of unused or wasted time are discovered that could be spent in a learning activity. Quina (1989) points out, for example, the importance of using "wait time" for learning experiences. "Wait time" refers to the long or short periods a person spends standing in line at banks, riding on busses, sitting in doctor's offices, and so on. This time can be spent reviewing notes, memorizing lists, or reading for pleasure. Time plans can be very enlightening for an instructor, because many inner-city urban community college students have time-consuming personal responsibilities unimagined by some middle-class instructors. Assignments that might seem reasonable to teachers recalling their own college experiences might be very difficult, if not impossible, for their students.

A time management conference associated with this time plan allows instructors to stress the importance of planning, time management, and organization. At the same time, instructors can gain insight into the lives of their students. One thing instructors might learn, for example, is that many do not have a clear-cut understanding of what it takes to experience real learning. Also, instructors may discover that some attend classes only with the intention of obtaining grades that they believe will ultimately

entitle them to some kind of certification or diploma that will, in turn, enable them to get a better job. Learning, in the abstract sense highly valued by many instructors, may make little sense to inner-city students. However, as many of the studies in Johnson's (1980) work indicate, when learning is tied in with some practical skill that is either job-related or that will make life easier for students, they are more likely to make the effort.

Introductory Methods and Activities

Literary critics and empirical educational researchers provide a wealth of information; however, before instructors can use what can be found in their writings, three things must be accomplished. First, students must be taught to adopt a positive attitude toward reading. Second, they must then learn that there are two basic types of text, expository and narrative, and know how to tell the difference between the two. Finally, they must learn the appropriate strategies for reading each text type. If these preliminary goals are not accomplished, students will not be ready to learn and to use the subtle and sophisticated techniques of scholars from the fields of literary criticism and educational research.

Before instructors in any discipline can help their students read and understand the texts for a particular discipline, they must be aware that many of their students do not, as a rule, read anything at all. Influencing a student to habitually read books for pleasure helps to establish a habit of reading as a worthwhile and rewarding way of passing time. This is critical because, as Goodman (1967, 1985), Ingarden (1973), Iser (1974, 1980), Smith (1985, 1988), and others have shown, we learn to read by reading, and students who read little or not at all make no advancement. The inner-city community college instructor must use every pedagogical trick and inducement to get students to begin recreational reading as a regular daily activity, including, if necessary, giving positive grades for daily reading.

Clearly, the purpose of education is to have students learn something they do not know and master skills they do not possess, but students cannot begin the process of learning anything from books if they refuse to or cannot read them. Though it is true that these adults are in college, many

have the reading habits, skills, and attitudes of elementary readers and, similarly, respond best to tangible rewards. Furthermore, students must also be induced to react to silent reading in some verbal way since, as scholars and researchers have similarly shown, readers must weave their own thoughts into a text to make it become meaningful. Therefore, the student must either talk or write about this reading in some way, even if it is simply to record a few responses in a reading journal. Instructors must be patient, however, because for some students the establishment of a reading habit, in and of itself, may take an entire semester or longer. Sometimes, previously dysfunctional students, after they acquire basic skills, must continue working on their own, with tutors, or by repeating classes in order to firmly establish desired reading practices. Instructors must begin by getting students to read for pleasure rather than necessity alone, for if students do not have a positive attitude toward reading, all attempts at teaching sophisticated reading techniques or any lesson that requires reading will meet with failure.

One technique to get students to read and be in touch with what they are reading is the old chestnut of an "outside reading book." This activity has a unique benefit for both inner-city teachers and students. In addition to providing reading opportunity and practice, it broadens the students' background and exposes them to edited standard English. To inner-city students whose language experience is almost entirely verbal and non-standard, this may be their only exposure to standard written discourse. Even when non-standard dialects are used in dialogue, they are usually marked off from standard prose with quotation marks, so the difference is apparent to the reader. Thus, "outside reading books" can provide the teachers with a rich, readily available, student-selected source of examples for important aspects of language. Later, when students are ready to learn more complex narrative and rhetorical features, these books also become a resource for learning sophisticated aspects of discourse, such as narrative as it relates to history, the implied author, the teleogenic plot, Rabinowitz's rules (Appendix B), and so forth.

The second step in helping students get more out of their reading, demonstrated by such researchers as Lehr (1988), Gordon and Rennie (1987), Hidi and Baird (1988) and others, is to make students aware of the existence of and the characteristics and strategies for reading two ma-

jor text types, narrative and expository. Many students complain that they cannot "follow" expository material or say that it does not "hold their interest." This is often because they are so habituated to the narrative form that they automatically activate their cognitive schemata for narrative material whenever they begin to read anything. Then, if they are reading expository material, they become frustrated when, instead of encountering characters, settings, conflicts, events or any of the other familiar attributes of narratives, they find themselves in a sea of abstract ideas that are not held together by any sort of plot.

Literary critics such as White (1987), and emergent literary theorists such as Teale and Sulzby (1986) and Englehart and Hiebart (1984) have shown the pervasiveness of narrative form, which has as its foundation temporal and causal progression, as being the only kind of organizing sequence untutored students seem able to grasp. As scholars have shown, we learn the narrative pattern very early in life, and it is well established in children by the time they begin kindergarten. Other empirical researchers have shown that elementary school children automatically use narrative schemata for organizing information unless they are instructed how to use different organizing principles. It is only natural that people would activate the only cognitive schema they know for reading all texts. Students, then, first must be made aware of the two principal patterns for text organization, expository and narrative, and then must be made familiar with examples of various types of expository forms, such as argument, description, and comparison.

Looking for a characteristic expository arrangement of text features in specific forms of expository text, such as definition, argument, and comparison, is facilitated once a student is aware of the distinction between narrative and expository text. This might seem so obvious to an experienced reader that it could be overlooked when planning a lesson or reading assignment. If students are conscious they are reading expository material, they are in a position to search through their repertoire of various expository configurations to find the schema that appears to fit the pattern they predict the text will follow. This will serve as a template against which they start to trace the pattern of the text.

By asking students to read and compare two writings by the same author, one an expository text and the other a narrative, an instructor can

explore many of the issues therein that will be discussed later while teaching students to identify characteristic textual features of both literary forms. For example, students could read and discuss a passage expressing Celie's love for Shug, from *The Color Purple*, and compare it with an address entitled "Choice: A Tribute to Martin Luther King," both by Alice Walker. More advanced readers could read "Sonny's Blues" and "The Harlem Ghetto" by James Baldwin. Each pair of writings focuses on similar subjects, love and admiration in the first and the hardships of ghetto life in the second. Many of Rabinowitz's Rules of Reading from *Before Reading* (1987), particularly those with clever and amusing names, such as the Rule of Chutzpah or the Rule of the Other Shoe, can be introduced at this point. Similarly, Meyer's concept of top-down organization (1987) and other rhetorical structures can be introduced, after which students could be asked to locate the use of such rules in the texts at hand. There are many excellent composition textbooks that offer a variety of genre forms from which lessons like this can be extracted. The important thing is that, when essays or stories are assigned for reading, even if they are intended to be models for composition assignments, students should be aware of those specific text features that label a text as narrative or expository. Teachers must determine the students' extent of textual awareness before beginning a lesson, either by informal questioning or by diagnostic testing. If students are found to be unfamiliar with narrative and expository text features, instructors must teach these characteristics or recommend outside remedial help. It is not enough to assume that students can make the distinction independently.

Researchers have shown that different content areas lend themselves to different patterns, and a proficient reader must learn the characteristic patterns as well as other factors such as lexicon, fundamental background, basic assumptions, and so forth. This applies to the field of literature as well, since the narrative pattern learned by children is that of popular narratives. Cognitive schemata for popular narratives may not have constituents to handle some of the complexities found in sophisticated "artistic" narratives taught in English classes. Hence, instructors of any content area classes that utilize narrative materials must be aware that the features of narrative texts they assign might be different from those of popular narratives to which students are accustomed. For example, in popular narra-

tives, expositions tend to be short and straightforward. In Sue Grafton's mysteries the crime is usually committed in the first short chapter and the detective sets about finding the perpetrator in a step-by-step manner. Thus, Grafton provides the reader with the exposition. In Wilkie Collins' "artistic" mystery novel *The Moonstone,* the crime is alluded to in the book's Preface but it is told and retold by several different characters, each with a different perspective. Readers of Collins' work must constantly reintegrate this information, thereby actively constructing their own exposition. Collins' narrative style is more demanding of readers than Grafton's and, if they are not prepared for it, students might become confused and frustrated.

Instructors must be cautioned not to assume that students are aware that these two broad categories of text type exist or that they know how and when to activate the appropriate cognitive schemata necessary to interpret them. This awareness must be taught. Research (Gordon & Rennie, 1987; Kent, 1984; Long, Winograd, & Bridge, 1989; Mulcahy & Samuels, 1987; Peresich, Meadows & Sinatra 1990; Roller & Schreiner, 1985) has shown that lack of sensitivity to text type is the rule rather than the exception at all levels of education, unless students have specific instruction to heighten awareness. Inner-city community college instructors must not leave this task to reading specialists alone who, at best, come in contact with a fraction of the students who attend other classes. It is the responsibility of all instructors to deal with this issue.

Reader and writer expectations are related to the problem of students' tendency to apply cognitive schemata for popular narratives to all texts they read, expecting all texts to be narrative. Students frequently refer to any written composition, even essays they have written, as "stories." Therefore, once they have been made aware of the two major text types, they must be taught how to distinguish between them. They should be taught the various cues that authors use. These cues are words, phrases or gross patterns of organization to which authors expect a certain response. Sophisticated readers respond appropriately to these cues and, hence, understand what they are reading. Various narrative and expository examples of discourse from mass media can serve to introduce the concepts of writer expectations that serve as aids for readers in activating the appropriate cognitive schemata for specific texts. On a strictly textual

level, attention can be called to certain words and phrases, such as those found in Rabinowitz's Rules of Notice, in both narrative and expository texts, which focus readers' attention and prepare them for a certain kind of text to follow (p. 53). For example, when a work starts out with a fantasy-inducing sentence such as "Once upon a time...," or "One day, Harold looked up from the job he was doing and began to wonder if..., the reader prepares to read a story. When a work starts off with a direct factual statement like "There are four main reasons for..." or "The least common naturally occurring element in the Periodic Table is..." the reader should prepare to read an expository text containing factual information.

This touches on the issue of reader and writer expectations investigated both by literary critics and empirical researchers. Goodman (1967, 1985), Smith (1985, 1988) and others show how these expectations prepare a reader on a lexical level while Brooks (1984), Davis (1987), Meyer (1977, 1987), Meyer & Rice (1984), Rabinowitz (1987) and others demonstrate this principle on a more global scale. For example, knowing to expect top-down organization for certain expository writings or knowing the fundamental elements of plot prepares students for expository or narrative texts. Also, the reader can be taught to follow cues inserted by the writer that will guide throughout the course of reading a particular document, such as the standardized format for legal briefs or Rabinowitz's Rules of Notice for narrative material. Awareness that such cues exist will enhance the likelihood that the reader will pick up the organizational thread of a particular work and follow it. More important, practice in locating organizational cues heightens comprehension.

A lecture/discussion on how to use a writer's manipulative techniques to aid in reading expository material might be based on the observations made by rhetorically-oriented critics combined with findings of expository researchers. Instructors can call students' attention to the fact that certain types of expository text have characteristic organizational features such as Meyer's top-down organization (1987), including "problem/solution," "comparison," "causation," and "description." These devices can be demonstrated in examples from advertising and then pointed out in the student's own textbooks. Students can be asked to find evidence of these devices in three or four different textbooks from various

classes. The best examples might be photocopied by the instructor and kept for use in future classes. An adjunct to this lesson could be a writing assignment in which the students are asked to insert rhetorical devices that will guide a reader through the text. Traditional methods of teaching expository text structure, such as clusters, tree diagrams or outlines, seem to be effective tools for teaching overall organization of propositions after they have been located with lexical cues. Similarly, story maps seem to be effective in teaching the basics of narrative organization. It is important that students be taught the organizing principles that underlie the basic structures of both narrative and expository texts, and that they have plenty of opportunity to fill in story maps for narratives and make various organizational diagrams for different kinds of expository text.

Once students have mastered the ability to describe the pattern of organization of a particular type of reading material by following a teacher-provided diagram, they can begin to make predictions about the expected pattern of an unfamiliar text. Their predictions can be tested through reading and describing the pattern they perceive, and by making their own schematic diagrams. Teachers should be cautioned that this takes preparation time. Teaching students to distinguish the broad structural differences between narrative and expository texts may take an entire semester.

Determination of basic text type should begin the moment one picks up something to read. Students can be taught to attend to certain textual aspects prior to actual decoding. For instance, they should learn to take note of subject matter, basic format, titles and headings, the presence or absence of visual materials such as illustrations, charts, and so forth, to prepare themselves for determining whether they are reading narrative or expository material. The more awareness students have of basic text type at the onset of reading, the better. By the time students have read a few paragraphs they should have activated the appropriate cognitive schemata for basic text type. If the student must go back to readjust cognitive schemata for overall type, dysfunction may occur.

Classification of text type implies a choice, not necessarily conscious, of cognitive schemata. This gross metacognitive act must precede further refinements. Enhancement of comprehension, as well as intellectual satisfaction, results from monitoring one's mental actions. It is hoped that this will happen as students respond to such concepts as White's no-

tion of narrativity in history (1987), Booth's rhetorical devices (1983), writer and reader expectations, implicit political ideology, teleogenic plots, and so forth. However, response to subtleties such as these cannot occur before students are aware and appreciative of reading as an active experience that sometimes may involve consciously setting goals and testing hypotheses.

If these two steps are accomplished and students keep up the practice of independent reading, they may begin to develop sensitivity to some of the previously mentioned subtleties without further formal instruction. When and if a whole class is ready, however, the instructor can develop lessons that will embrace, at least in some ways, the issues addressed by literary critics and which will incorporate the findings of the educational researchers. In this way, the gap between theory and practice might begin to close.

Advanced Methods and Activities

Over the past thirty years, many insights concerning the nature of reading have come from the disciplines of literary criticism and educational research. These are sophisticated concepts that require a certain amount of textual awareness. Once students are cognizant that there are two basic types of text organization, narrative and expository, and can distinguish between the two and use the appropriate strategies for reading them, they are ready for more advanced principles. The task at hand, then, is to integrate observations from literary criticism and educational research to form practical teaching methods that can be used in inner-city community college classrooms.

Determination of text type involves a decision at the beginning of the reading act and, once the appropriate cognitive schema for text type is activated, it generally remains constant. On the other hand, response to more subtle issues raised by literary critics and educational researchers may necessitate continual readjustments of cognition throughout the act of reading. This kind of mental activity is more demanding than gross determination of text type, but can lead to increased intellectual satisfaction.

Students' intellectual growth is the ultimate goal of college instructors. However, they must be cautious when introducing activities that involve metacognitive skills. Many urban inner-city community college students have negative attitudes about reading and a powerful resistance to learning activities that involve introspection. Deep analysis of reading material, particularly fiction, which might trigger emotional responses as well as intellectual ones, can be very threatening. As critics and researchers have shown, sensitization to metaphor and other literary features through close reading can precipitate restructuring of the students' "Global Semantic Universes" (Davis, p. 222). Expanding students' frames of reference is the ultimate aim of most instructors, but it must be done delicately. Instructors must make sure that students feel secure and pleased with themselves on the successful completion of the beginning tasks of text type identification before they move on to more complex operations.

Some of the observations of literary critics and empirical researchers that can be taught at this point are those that address narrativity as history, rhetorical devices, implicit ideology and interpretive communities, gaps, intended audience, point of view, plot, truth, and "artistic" versus popular literature. These are not necessarily new elements to scholars of literature, but they go far beyond the academic and intellectual experiences of many inner-city community college students. Furthermore, in the process of reading, one is confronted with an intermingling of these features. If students are to be taught, these features must be singled out and considered one at a time. It is hoped that students will then incorporate these ideas into their repertoire of reading skills.

Narrativity in History

One issue raised by literary critics and educational researchers is that history texts possess some narrative features, but are distinct from either popular or "artistic" narratives. White (1987) suggests that history evolved out of ancient narratives and that modern people perceive themselves as shaped by the patterns of these narratives. He asserts that we examine and recreate our images of ourselves in light of the knowledge of

ourselves that history provides (p. 36). If modern narratives evolved out of the folk stories of history, and modern history, in turn, evolved out of the narratives of folktales and legends, as White posits, a good way to introduce inner-city students to the principles of historical narrative form might be to have them write stories that are based on their own family histories.

Many college students have very extensive experience with popular narratives, but they often have very limited experience with those associated with history as an academic discipline. Asking students to write stories from their own personal histories—not autobiographies, but narratives that relate events that have happened to past and present family members—might sensitize students to historiography and, at the same time, give them an opportunity to learn and practice fundamentals of written composition. Instructors must be careful to make a clear distinction between history and autobiography. Students must be encouraged to adhere to the standards and techniques of recording oral history and to always keep within the restraints of the third-person point of view. Instructors can use White's theory of historicity as a basis for a lesson in which individual students in a class write narratives, with names changed, that tell stories from their own personal or family histories, which then are shared and discussed by the whole group. This discussion can help each person re-examine and restructure his or her own narrative as a part of a revising and editing stage of the writing process. As the individual stories are shared with the group, common themes or other similarities might begin to emerge that can serve as unifying elements to bind the collection together. Sometimes members of a class have friends and relatives in common so that characters in one student's story may also appear in another's. Putting the whole collection together as a book can be the overall semester project. It would provide students with opportunities for polishing, selecting and arranging the stories and writing an introduction to tie the whole collection together.

While students are learning about historical narratives, it might be a good time to introduce histories of language. Since material from a writer's personal knowledge or experience, such as that used in the lesson described above, can form the basis of fictional narratives and offer a good starting point for student writing endeavors, it can be useful to make

students aware of some of the history of reading and writing. For example, learning about the history of a language teaches students that language is ever-changing and that a standard form of written language is the best way to make communication possible between divergent groups of people separated by space, time, and cultural factors. If students understand why they must write in standard English, they are more likely to make efforts to learn it and use it.

Videotape One of the 1986 PBS series, "The Story of English" could be shown. For a close examination of how language changes, lecture and explanation can be with showing students photocopies or facsimiles of texts that were written at much earlier periods. *Beowulf* or any of the many historical expository writings, such as Holingshead's *Chronicles*, illuminated manuscripts, and other writings, can be used to start discussions about how and why reading and writing have evolved over the centuries. Comparisons between ancient and modern texts can be made. A facsimile of a section of a folio copy of *Hamlet*, for example, can be compared with a modern edition. This exercise could introduce the idea that there is more than one form of any language, and that written language, because it is less fluid than speech, serves as the standard for all those who speak any of its divergent forms.

In content areas other than English, a similar lesson can be built around ancient and modern historical writing, ancient and modern political treatises, ancient and modern scientific texts, and so forth. It is important to focus on the differences between standard and non-standard English and emphasize that standard English is the lingua franca of legal, government, academic and business communication. It alerts students to what is expected of them if they are aiming for success in these areas. Teachers, including English instructors, must be prepared for the fact that many urban inner-city students are very unsophisticated about linguistic and textual matters. Many have never considered the differences between one form of linguistic expression and another, and have little or no knowledge that language has an evolutionary and cultural history or that there are such things as differing linguistic communities.

Comparing ancient and modern texts is not a new technique, but if instructors are familiar with White's theory about the relationship between history and narrative form, they can help students understand that

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human experience is what forms the core of history and, just as societies and cultures change over time, so does language.

Rhetorical Devices

The concepts concerning rhetorical devices explored by Wayne Booth (1983) and others can serve as reinforcement in written composition, such as the idea that a good writer has a specific goal in mind at the beginning of a writing endeavor, and guides the reader along with rhetorical cues.

An English instructor teaching a literature class could plan an entire semester around Rabinowitz's Rules of Reading (1987) summarized in Appendix B. Inner-city community colleges, with their characteristically practical orientations, usually require two basic freshmen English classes that stress written composition rather than interpretation of literature. However, there are generally readings required as springboards for these written composition assignments, and literature courses are offered at higher levels. Remedial reading classes are also usually available. To whatever extent narrative text material is used in a particular class, the instructor could build in a lesson that incorporates Rabinowitz's Rules.

Rabinowitz describes four major rules and many subrules, which, he argues, govern the way a reader attends to narrative text. The instructor might begin a semester with a study of Rabinowitz's first set of rules, the Rules of Notice. Using prepared handouts, the instructor could present the Rules of Notice with various examples. Rather than beginning by asking students to locate these rules in printed text, it might be advisable to start with the video-tape of a popular television drama. This way, all the students could observe the rules as they operate in the development of the story. The instructor could stop the picture at any one point when a rule is manifest and the whole class could discuss what it suggests. After this group whole-class activity, the students would be asked, as an individual assignment, to locate examples of these rules as they are used in selected assigned texts. Finally, they could be given a composition assignment necessitating the use of these rules. The instructor could parallel this lesson by similarly teaching the Rules of Notice as they operate in selected

expository texts. Then the instructor could teach similar lessons on Rabinowitz's Rules of Signification, Configuration and Coherence (Appendix B). Thus, students can see that the insertion of elements to which readers respond, such as these rules, is how an author guides the reader through the act of processing a particular reading.

Implicit Ideology and Interpretive Communities

Work on rhetorical devices can also lead to understanding how writers make use of the reader's underlying ideologies and rely on the shared understanding of "interpretive communities." This was demonstrated by Stanley Fish in *Surprised by Sin* (1967), in which he shows how Milton in *Paradise Lost* played on the reader's sympathies, which were colored by the value system of the "interpretive community" to which the intended reader and Milton belonged. Students can start with simple and obvious texts like those found in advertising and work up to longer and more complex works such as movies, and then novels. Many inner-city community college students are familiar with the film *The Color Purple,* even if they have not read the book. Instructors can point out the ways Walker evokes the sentiments of her readers at the beginning of her novel. Certain attitudes about the role of Black men in relation to women, religion, and the work ethic could be explored in class discussion. The instructor could bring in excerpts of other works by Alice Walker to demonstrate the consistent presence of Walker's own underlying ideologies.

Gaps

Students unable to read parts or all of *The Color Purple* could supplement their understanding by watching the movie on video, since many of the rhetorical devices are present in the film. Incorporated in this could be a discussion of the way words induce different visual images in each reader's imagination, whereas the images offered by the film are closer to the same for everyone, since they by-pass imagination by offering a prepackaged image. The instructor could introduce Chatman's (1990) notion

that, as in printed text, there are certain "gaps" in visual media. Instead of the reader imaginatively filling in unsupplied information about such things as what a character or room looks like, the viewer must supply such unseeable information as what a character is thinking or feeling. This can lead to a discussion of why reading might be more likely to lead to a greater range and diversity of response than would visual mass media and why, for that reason, movies, television and pictures are such successful media for propaganda. Again, examples from popular media, particularly pictorial advertising, can be very helpful.

Besides calling the student's attention to what has been provided by the writer, the instructor can heighten the student's awareness as to what is missing, as will be shown shortly in reference to the Donald Goines project. Wolfgang Iser (1980) wrote lengthy descriptions of what happens conceptually as the reader bridges the ideational gaps in a particular text. Kenneth Goodman's view that reading is an "intellectual guessing game" parallels this notion (1982, p. 22). Instead of forcing the reader to "go by the book," as the only reliable authority, activities should be planned that encourage students to anticipate what is coming up in a text. This is not to suggest that students make wild or careless predictions just for the sake of response. Instead, students should be encouraged to make predictions from one point in a text to another on the basis of such implicit cues as verb tense, temporality, cause-effect, and so on. For example, students could be provided with short stories whose sections have been scrambled. They would then be asked to reassemble the story in a logical or realistic pattern. They can be given stories with the climax or denouement missing and be asked to create a conclusion that can be explained by the events that precede it. They could also be asked to create missing expositional material to justify events or situations in the development or ending. Available to the beginning teacher are many content-area resource books with study guides and story grammars that encourage filling in gaps. Teachers may want to create their own study guides that would lead the students to anticipate key pieces of information, outcomes of experiments, results of important events, and so forth.

A crucial consideration in such exercises, which also ties in with lessons on rhetorical devices, is to make sure students can explain why they have assembled their responses as they have. They should be encouraged

and rewarded for pointing out the cues that determine their choices. This point touches on the issue of natural versus contrived text. This kind of exercise might be difficult with natural text, which writers sometimes intentionally do not try to make "reader friendly." Cues are present in natural text, but often they are subtle and implicit, especially if students have not had much opportunity to look for rhetorical devices. Finding them can be useful, but to an unsophisticated reader such a task can be very difficult. As Lundberg's (1987) research with legal texts indicates, the difference between a novice and an expert reader is simply knowing what to look for and how to use certain pertinent textual information. Inexperienced readers might need to begin with texts that are artificially loaded with obvious straightforward cues. When they are comfortable with making predictions, they can gradually be introduced to more subtle, complex "natural" texts. Creative students and teachers should be encouraged to write their own narrative and expository material that lends itself to this type of activity.

Another exercise to illustrate the concept of gaps in literature would take some excerpts from narratives familiar to students, such as sections from Donald Goines' *Whoreson*. Books by this author are controversial because of their graphic violence, misogyny, low-life characters, and non-standard language. Teachers who work with students whose tastes and preferences are different from their own must get over their own prejudices. Although Kenneth Goodman (1982) was addressing the issue of teaching reading to children who habitually speak a non-standard dialect, what he stated bears on the instruction of many urban adults as well. He said, "The solution to reading problems of divergent speakers lies in changing the attitudes of teachers and writers of instructional programs toward the language of the learners" (p. 197). In spite of what many pedagogues might think, Goines is very popular with many urban adult readers, and the appeal of his books can be very persuasive. Since students must read in order to learn to read better, teachers should not hesitate to use Goines's books as a starting point. The teacher could read aloud selected paragraphs, stopping after each phrase to ask students to describe on paper the images that come to mind as they hear the words read. Afterward, they can meet in groups and compare their responses. Some responses will be quite detailed and all differ somewhat. This

should demonstrate to the students the richness of their own imaginations and the extent of the role it plays in their reading. A composition assignment associated with this activity might be to have students write essays describing the appearance of a character or setting, using words that express the images that come to mind as the students hear the text.

The Intended Reader

Donald Goines' books can also be useful in introducing another expectation that writers have when creating a text—the intended reader or audience. Goines's books are set in and about modern Detroit's inner city, which is one reason they are so popular among students at Wayne County Community College. Students enjoy reading about familiar places and situations. How people from different parts of the country or from non-urban background might react to Goines' works could be the topic of a class discussion leading into the idea of intended reader.

To illustrate what happens when a reader is not a member of a writer's intended audience, students can be asked to read Tolstoy's "Uncle Vanya." Some of the students could be given a paragraph of background information about life in nineteenth century Russia, the rights of the peasants before the revolution, indentured servitude, and so on. This would provide them with the kind of background information Tolstoy might have reasonably expected from his Russian readers. These students would be the group leaders. After all reading is completed, the teacher might divide the class into small groups, each with a group leader. Part of the job of these leaders would be to clarify any misconceptions or confusion over the setting of the story, motivation of the characters, and so forth. Misconceptions may occur when readers assume the story is about people, places, and events typical of their own experience, when, in fact, certain story features may be quite unfamiliar. A general discussion could help show that Tolstoy's intended reader was a Russian national familiar with Russian social history. It could be further pointed out that the central character of the story evokes the reader's pity in spite of a vast temporal and cultural gap, which is one of the features that makes this work qualify as a classic. Some students may not feel sorry for the little

boy; they may think he is stupid or crazy. Differences of opinion on interpretation could be analyzed by the class in order to better understand how a reader's background affects interpretation.

Attention could be called to the fact that when students themselves write an expository message there is always an intended receiver of that information. There will also probably be some in the class who write creatively, and who can be encouraged to share their own notions of who they expect will read or experience what they have created. Those same students could serve as group leaders or consultants for other creative writing assignments, or their guidance could be solicited for the family history writing project. It could be pointed out that the people who become the readers of the students' stories might be quite different from the student authors. Under such circumstances, students could be asked to consider what final image of themselves they want to leave in the readers' mind and how they would achieve that effect.

Point of View

Creative story telling or writing can also be a way of teaching the concept of point of view. As has been pointed out, many unsophisticated readers assume that the narrator or protagonist of a particular work is the author. As a student's understanding of rhetorical devices develops and writer/reader expectations begin to crystallize, appreciation for narrative point of view as opposed to authorial perspective can become focused. The short stories, "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall," by Katherine Anne Porter and "My Oedipus Complex," by Frank O'Connor, read in tandem, can be used to demonstrate how a writer can create a narrator quite unlike herself or himself. To instill necessary background about the authors or circumstances of the stories, the instructor might need to offer lecture/discussions, or supplementary handouts with illustrations, when applicable, or ask students to do assigned research. In the case of the first story, students need to know that Porter based her portrayal of a dying old lady on her observations of elderly people and her own documented near-death experience with influenza, which she describes in *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*. In the case of the second story, the teacher can bring out through

guided discussion that the irony and humor of the story comes from the adult language and attitudes expressed by a small child. In the story, the little boy becomes indignant and incensed when his father returns from the war and assumes his rightful place as consort to the mother, only to be joined in misery and isolation with the narrator later, when a new baby is born. Students can easily learn to appreciate the irony of a five-year-old with sophisticated language and point of view.

A corollary to this assignment would be to use a media narrative, like many that are current in television news reports or newspaper headlines, to teach the concept of differing perspectives. For instance, students could reconstruct the story of a widely known crime, such as the O. J. Simpson case, from the viewpoints of the victim, the alleged perpetrator, the judge, the witnesses, and so forth. Here again the importance of omission and inclusion of selected material can be considered as it relates to point of view and, ultimately, bias and ideology.

Less obvious but also important is the idea of bias in expository text. A visit to a used book store can often provide a wealth of information on individual perspective by comparing older books on almost any historical, or even scientific, subject with comparable modern ones. Old medical and nursing texts offer interesting perspectives on childbirth, for example. Students can be asked to scour old history textbooks to look for references to the contributions of minorities or women. For a research project, students can be asked to find out how many names of women and minorities are found on lists of "great books" or "recommended readings" which have been issued at various points over the last one hundred years.

Plot

Still another textual feature that literary critics have commented upon extensively is plot. First, readers must be made aware that there is a difference between factual narratives as found in family history or current news reports, and fictional narrative as found in literature. The difference, as shown by Hayden White (1987) and others, lies in the presence or absence of plot. White observes the current trend to "narrativize" history and factual news stories. Teachers can demonstrate this point with refer-

ences to current television programs that dramatize actual events through "reenactment," and "news" programs that create a narrative to surround otherwise logically unrelated events. The narrativization of real events, paradoxically, makes them "believable" to the viewers.

Students can be taught to chart out the events of a fictional plot with a story grammar form that they fill out as they read along. There are many good outlines for story grammars available in the content area textbooks, for example, in the Vacca & Vacca or Richardson & Morgan books. A lesson in plot structure using story diagrams is not a new technique, but for many reasons few inner-city community college students have experience with this teaching instrument. As Eco in *The Role of the Reader* (1984) and Davis in *Resisting Novels* (1987) have pointed out, redundancy is very much manifest in popular narratives. Therefore, a lesson in plot structure might best begin with stories that have very predictable and repetitious story lines familiar to inner-city community college students. Examples are some contemporary series mysteries, Harlequin romances, or, as Eco observes, the Superman and the James Bond stories, or some weekly television dramas and sit-coms. Once students recognize the various plot features in these redundant works, they can try to chart the story grammars of more subtle and diverse stories. Again, examples from mass media, particularly television, must be used at the onset of instruction, with consideration given to the limited reading background and experience of many of the students.

Once students have developed an understanding of basic plot structure, they should be ready for a lesson that emphasizes the teleogenic nature of narrative text organization. Teachers would select a short story and divide it into four sections where logical breaks might occur. Then they would prepare four sets of copies of the story: one set would consist of only the first fourth of the story, the second set would consist of the first half of the story, a third set would consist of three quarters of the story, and finally, the fourth set would be made up of copies of the entire story. A class would be divided into four groups and students in the first group would get the one quarter text, the second group would get the half story, and so on. To accompany each set of stories, teachers would prepare questions about such things as the motivations or attitudes of the characters, the underlying factors associated with the events, and the outcome of

the story. Before any questions are answered, students would have a chance to discuss the story in their groups to ensure that poor readers would have a chance to verify and reinforce their interpretations. After the questions are answered, students in the whole class would compare answers. They would see that the answers would vary depending on how much of the story they had read, and thus, learn the concept of teleogenicity as it relates to literature.

Truth

Another issue expounded by literary critics is truth, particularly as it relates to ideology or theme. On the one hand, readers may have certain preconceived beliefs about whether they intend to respond to a certain discourse as if it were true or not, depending on how they regard certain texts or genres. Readers' attitudes about the potential veracity of a certain text has a strong influence on how they interpret the material. On the other hand, writers' attitude about what they are writing and the intended or implied reader are closely related to ideology. Students need to become conscious of the fact that the reader and writer may not necessarily have the same outlook on the content of a particular text. Material from current news shows can illustrate the relativity of what is deemed to be real or true.

Davis (1987) makes a strong case for how people willingly fail to recognize the limitations and artificiality of setting, characterization and language in novels. He demonstrates how authors use surprisingly few details in some novels to construct elements that readers accept without hesitation as "true to life" (p. 24). He suggests that readers of novels want to believe that what they are reading is true so they can get into the story. He cautions them to resist novels so as not to be seduced by the novels' covert ideology. The fact that Davis believes that it is possible for the reader to fall prey to the novel's implicit messages suggests that readers do, indeed, believe certain novels are true or at least true to life.

Gordon and Rennie (1987), in their comparative studies of children's responses to fictional and factual material about lions, demonstrate how what a reader believes is colored by genre. The results of their study show

that expository material has a stronger influence than similar narrative text in changing students' prior knowledge concerning the relative ferocity or altruism of animals. They conclude that students tend to find expository writing more "trustworthy." They advise teachers who might use narrative text as a means of conveying factual information to make explicit the information to be learned so the students don't think they are reading "just a story" (p. 186). Teachers need to demonstrate that when readers believe that they are reading "just a story," they are most vulnerable. While they are distracted and entranced by the story unfolding in their minds, they are unaware of the ideological messages that slip by under cover of the story. This may be even more true of film. Students need to be made aware through class discussion, enhanced by film clips and excerpts of popular works, of the power of fiction and other narrative material in forming popular opinion.

One strategy would be to distribute a questionnaire in the early part of the semester that queries students' reading habits, preferences and attitudes about different forms of literature and discourse, including fiction and non-fiction, and narrative and expository text (Appendix A). The results can be tabulated and set aside for later use. Inexperienced readers may respond that fiction is "not true" and "not to be taken seriously." At a later point in the semester, when students are learning about truth in literature, the instructor could write on the blackboard those features that the students feel make the narratives "true to life." At this point the instructor can introduce the data from the questionnaires and ask the students to explain how it is that this material which, by their standards, may be seen as neither truthful nor serious could be used as a model for "telling it like it is." This could open the door for a discussion and ultimate appreciation for the attitude underlying the "willing suspension of disbelief." The instructor can bring up student-written family histories such as those mentioned earlier as a starting point for a discussion of verisimilitude, since few of the student writers will admit that they intended to write anything but the "truth," or deny that they used a variety of narrative text features to create a "realistic" story. They can also be asked to consider their own choices about what to include or exclude in their family narratives. Such considerations can be particularly enlightening. As students begin to consider and examine their own motives in writing, their

underlying personal ideologies come into focus and they will begin to appreciate that when writers accommodate events into a narrative they immediately establish a moral base for the story. Also, at this point the students can go back to the excerpted literature to determine what kind of information has been left out and why. They could, for instance, write their own script for what "really" happens on an episode of a daytime drama such as *As the World Turns* or *General Hospital.* Once students can learn to sort the ideological "truth" from the literal "truth" of a work of fiction, they can better appreciate the anticlimactic quality of reading an expository text whose reality is not intended to be enigmatic.

Popular versus "Artistic" Texts

After they have spent some time learning such sophisticated notions as those mentioned earlier, students might have acquired enough objectivity to consider some of the important differences between popular and "artistic" literature. Some scholars, such as Johnson (1980) in *Reading and the Adult Learner,* maintain that all texts used to instruct urban inner-city adult students must have some practical or job-related significance. It can be argued, however, that "artistic" literature, including narrative fiction or poetry, can have immense value to all people, and that urban inner-city community college students should not be denied it. Often, an instructor must use department-mandated anthologies that contain "artistic" literature. If inner-city English teachers want to or must teach "artistic" literature, they must accept the burden of making it meaningful and relevant to the students. In most cases, "great literature" has universal meaning that prevails over time and culture, but instructors cannot assume that students can read it or understand it without very specific assistance.

It is also at this point that students might examine the basic formulas, like those demonstrated by Eco (1984) and Davis (1987), for popular literature. This will have been foreshadowed by discussions of expectations, interpretive communities, Rabinowitz's Rules, and other topics. This is a delicate issue because many college students are devotees of popular media heroes such as Rambo, Shaft, Bruce Lee, or Tupac Shakur, and suggestions that might challenge their "heroic" stature could be threatening.

Some students may even refuse to take a chance at becoming involved in the lives of characters appearing in "artistic" literature.

Sometimes unsophisticated readers resist novels, short stories and poems, even when they can read them, not for the reasons Davis posits, but because they force introspection and activate fantasies they might feel unprepared to handle. Reading and understanding "artistic" literature might stimulate a readjustment of values, attitudes, and beliefs. For example, some of my students have expressed reluctance to read and discuss certain selections from Spargo's book of readings entitled *Selections from the Black* (1989), which graphically describe beatings and humiliations experienced by slaves, or the Joyce Carol Oates short story "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been," saying these works are "too violent," "negative," or "depressing."

Expository Material

Many features of expository writing, such as comparison and contrast, description, argument, enumeration, graphic aids, lists, and so forth are a matter of rhetorical devices and format. Since the intent of exposition is primarily to convey information forthrightly, many of the tantalizing nuances of narration that have been discussed here are absent. In fact, artistic devices can be counterproductive in expository texts. Although this is not true of sophisticated non-fiction such as critical commentaries and literary analysis, it is reflective of college textbooks and basic sources of information such as technical manuals. Readers of exposition often need and expect straightforward language that follows predictable patterns; they can become confused if the writer departs from expected conventions.

These predictable patterns are described in the many excellent books written for content area teachers that offer a wealth of suggestions for teaching the reading of various kinds of expository texts. One such example is Vacca and Vacca's (1996) *Content Area Reading*. This book has numerous suggestions for teaching students to recognize and use different text organizations. There are specific suggestions for teachers in most academic disciplines, and an extensive bibliography. For example, Vacca

and Vacca suggest ways to help students attend to certain format features such as the preface, table of contents, appendices, bibliography and index, which signal exposition as opposed to narrative. They recommend methods for teaching students to recognize various top-level structures such as description, sequence, comparison-contrast, cause-effect, and problem-solution. Examples from various disciplines are offered to teach methods that will help students perceive and use various expository text patterns, particularly semantic or cognitive maps and text pattern guides, for extracting information. Further, they offer many suggestions from various subject areas for helping students interpret and use graphic aids. The interpretation of charts, diagrams, photographs and other graphic aids requires special complex reading skills that are so specialized that otherwise experienced readers often skip over them. Instructions for reading them should not be overlooked.

Another very helpful book for teachers is Richardson and Morgan's (1997) *Reading to Learn in the Content Areas*. The chapter entitled "Reading for At-Risk Students" should be particularly helpful for inner-city community instructors. Students who feel they may not be quite ready to meet the academic demands of four-year institutions often choose the experience at a community college to strengthen their skills. Even though the two books for content area teachers mentioned here are geared for primary and secondary school teachers, there is much that is applicable to community college students who often operate with less than college-level reading skills. A community-college instructor should not resist using materials designed for lower-level teachers if these materials will help students get the most out of their textbooks.

Thoroughly tested suggestions for helping students learn to read both expository material and basic narrative structure are readily available. Because of the relative newness of critical and experimental insights concerning the more subtle aspects of narrative form, however, suggestions for teaching students to interpret advanced features of narrative are not easy to find in methods texts. For that reason, I have here devoted a disproportionate amount of space to offering teaching methods for advanced narrative features. Any interested community college instructor who assigns reading from textbooks that contain predominantly expository material can easily find resources to help teach students how to get the most

out of their texts. Those who must use primarily narrative texts, particularly "artistic" fictional narratives, are faced with a greater challenge.

Another problem is learning how to teach reading in a content area classroom without placing an undue burden on instructors. Teaching content area reading is an integral item of business without which learning from books cannot take place, but it does demand additional work from the instructor in preparing and reviewing handouts, study guides, outlines, and various other forms of learning enhancements.

Often, content area instructors say teaching reading is the job of English or reading instructors. As long as this attitude prevails, most students will have trouble with both expository and "artistic" narrative texts. This is particularly true for entering freshmen who, perhaps for the first time, find themselves confronted with long reading assignments in texts that are predominantly expository in form, such as biology, chemistry, sociology, psychology or math. Only in history books can readers sometimes find a balance of narrative and expository material; unfortunately, history classes are rarely required in programs offered by community colleges. It also must be noted that too often the secondary or community college level English class is overlooked in content area methods books. Many writers incorrectly assume that all English teachers know how to teach reading, since they themselves must be "good readers." I have tried to demonstrate that, even if one is familiar with narrative form, as is true of most students and teachers alike, it still may be necessary to instruct students to respond to the more subtle characteristics of narration.

Conclusion

It is especially important that instructors accept and work with students on the students' level. Instructors can expect that students will ultimately grow into their own potential, but this may not take the form instructors idealize. Teaching students how to read textbooks and other materials is a crucial step in opening the door to further learning through reading.

The suggestions made here are not meant to be exhaustive or complete. They are intended to illustrate how the current observations of cer-

tain selected reader-response literary critics and the findings of empirical educational researchers investigating reading comprehension and instruction can be incorporated into classes by inner-city community college instructors. They are also intended to stress the importance of sensitivity to the two general types of discourse, narrative and expository. This awareness, combined with knowledge of their respective characteristics as pointed out in the work of literary critics and empirical educational researchers, can have a significant positive impact on comprehension and, finally, appreciation of literary texts.

Most instructors find that over a period of time they mold and adapt their lessons to meet the needs of their students and the conditions under which learning takes place. In spite of its shortcomings and problems, interdisciplinarity can serve the needs of individual instructors if they can access its offerings. There is a great need to make known to classroom teachers the wealth of information from literary criticism and/or experimental research. It is the responsibility of educational professionals to bridge the gulf between sophisticated theory and practical application. It is hoped that theoretical and experimental information such as that explored here can find its way into the classroom, where people who need it most can profit from it. One of the responsibilities of inner-city community college educators is to make students aware of the varieties of texts and the appropriate skills for reading them. Only with this knowledge can students achieve the full spectrum of the reading experience that can provide them with the knowledge they need and, ultimately, the satisfaction of reading as an aesthetic as well as an intellectual experience.

Appendix A

The survey below could be given to all students enrolled in developmental classes. Its purpose is to explore the attitudes and habits students have about reading in order to help teachers prepare specific lessons.

Reading Checklist

Directions: This checklist is to find out how you use reading and TV for entertainment. In the space provided, place a check mark next to the statement if it is TRUE, as it applies to how you act or feel. If the statement does not apply to you, make no mark at all. These statements have only to do with your leisure-time activities. DO NOT apply them to reading you do for school or work.

1. _____ I like to read.

2. _____ Reading is one of my hobbies.

For statements 3-7, place a check mark next to the statement or statements that come closest to describing you.

3. _____ I read for entertainment daily.

4. _____ I read for entertainment weekly.

5. _____ I never read for entertainment.

6. _____ I watch TV for entertainment daily.

7. _____ I watch TV for entertainment occasionally.

For statements 8-12, place a check mark next to the ONE statement that best describes your viewing habits.

8. _____ I watch TV less than 2 hours a day.

9. _____ I watch TV 2 to 4 hours a day.

10. _____ I watch TV 4 to 6 hours per day.

11. _____ I watch TV more than 6 hours per day.

12. _____ I watch TV only on week-ends and vacations.

For items 13-21, place a check mark next to the ONE statement that tells what you like to watch on television the most.

13. _____ I watch mostly soap operas.

14. _____ I watch mostly quiz shows.

15. _____ I watch mostly night-time drama.

16. _____ I watch mostly sports shows.

17. _____ I watch mostly documentaries.

18. _____ I watch mostly news shows.

19. _____ I watch mostly TV sales.

20. _____ I watch mostly religious programs.

21. _____ I watch mostly comedy shows.

For items 22-28, place a check mark next to the ONE type of material you most like to read for entertainment.

22. _____ I read mostly stories and novels.

23. _____ I read mostly newspapers.

24. _____ I read mostly self-help books.

25. _____ I read mostly religious material.

26. _____ I read mostly magazines.

27. _____ I read mostly stories of people's lives.

28. _____ I read mostly poetry.

29. _____ I read mostly history.

30. _____ I read mostly social commentary.

For items 31-34, place a check mark ONLY next to the statements you believe to be TRUE.

31. _____ Fiction is to be taken seriously.

32. _____ Fiction is not to be taken seriously.

33. _____ Fiction can tell the truth.

34. _____ Fiction cannot tell the truth.

Appendix B

In *Before Reading: Narrative Conventions and the Politics of Interpretation*, Peter Rabinowitz (1987) states that "literary conventions are not in the text waiting to be uncovered, but in fact precede the text and make discovery possible in the first place" (p. 27). He further argues that the gap between the authorial audience, i.e., the audience authors anticipate for their writing, and the actual audience can be "bridged through education" (p. 33). He maintains that, in order to respond to a work "correctly" and join the authorial audience, the reader must know what its genre is at the onset (p. 42). What he says here applies primarily to narrative fiction and not expository text.

He believes that competing authorial readings are based on certain narrative conventions and he classifies them into a four-part system called Rabinowitz's Rules. He says, "These rules govern operations or activities that, from the author's perspective, [are] appropriate for the reader to perform when transforming texts...if he or she is to end up with the expected meaning" (p. 42).

First are the Rules of Notice. These rules enable readers to give priority to details. For example, titles are privileged, as are the first and last sentences of most texts, or certain seemingly obscure details associated with one particular author but not another.

Second are the Rules of Signification, which "tell us how to recast or symbolize or draw the significance from the elements that the first set of rules has brought to our attention" (p. 44).

Third are the Rules of Configuration. These rules govern the reader's ability to recognize plot patterns and formulas by assembling their requisite constituents.

Last are the Rules of Coherence, which state that "we should read a text in such a way that it becomes the best text possible." These rules deal with "textual disjunctures, permitting us to repair apparent inconsistencies by transforming them into metaphors, subtleties, and ironies" (p. 45). Moreover, the rules have many sub-rules with clever names such as Rules of Rupture or Rules of Snap Moral Judgment that pinpoint specific places in a narrative where the reader is guided by the text to respond in a certain way.

Rabinowitz does not suggest that students be taught to slavishly cling to these rules as a means of finding meaning or that the rules ought to be followed in any prescriptive pattern. He cautions that his description of the conventions of narrativity is "intended neither as a descriptive model of the way the human mind actually reads nor as an absolute and exhaustive classification. It is, rather, a practical analytic device" (p. 46).

These cogent, colorful rules could easily be taught and could make for a fun-filled assignment with fairly advanced students. These students could be given a teacher-prepared handout that lists all the rules and their sub-rules, and then students could go through a sort of scavenger hunt in a particular assigned reading to find them. There could be four teams, each representing the four major rules: Notice, Significance, Configuration, and Coherence, respectively, with an equal number of sub-rules to locate. A prize could be awarded to the team that first finds sought-for features. This activity could do much to make students aware of narrative text features, and it could be fun as well.

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Adult Readers' Metacognitive Strategies: Theory and Practice

Mary Lee Field

Several years ago a student—I'll call him Joe—stopped by my office with a tentative request to "ask a few questions." He was somewhat uncomfortable because his questions were about a book for another class, but I encouraged him to sit and talk a little. He laid out his dilemma like this:

> I'm a retired army man, and when I saw a course about World War I listed in the schedule for this term I eagerly enrolled in it. I'm too young to remember anything about World War I, and I thought the course would provide an excellent opportunity for me to learn about the major campaigns, battles, strategies, and leaders in that historic conflict. I even picked up the syllabus from the professor early and bought the first book we were to read, Barbara Tuchman's *The Proud Tower.*

He pulled the book out of his bag and continued to explain the problem:

> But this book is useless! There is nothing about the war, the generals and the battles. It's about the beards and hats and personalities of a bunch of English and European men. Why am I reading this book? It's a waste of time.

Joe's frustration was visible in his tone and manner as well as in his words. What could I say to help him?

I replied that I had read some of Barbara Tuchman's books, but I had not read *The Proud Tower.* I asked to look at the book for a minute. A brief scan of the title page, preface, table of contents, and the first paragraphs of the introduction and the conclusion solved the mystery quickly. Tuchman's subtitle is *A Portrait of the World Before the War 1890-1914.* She says in the preface that she wants to set the scene for WWI, explain social and cultural conditions, and provide readers with detailed portraits of the leaders who were important before war broke out. She even comments that "no shots will be fired" in the pages of the book. As I pointed out these things to Joe, he sat quietly. When I finished, he wondered aloud how I could know so much about the book from a three-minute pe-

rusal, when he had read more than half the book and didn't understand much at all?

By not reading (or thinking about) the subtitle, by not reading the preface, by not checking at the end of each chapter to see if his expectations were being met, Joe had fallen into the not-uncommon pattern of expecting the book to tell him what he *wanted* to learn rather than identifying and following the author's avowed purpose in the book. Joe is all too typical of adult readers who are confident in their reading ability and have survived in work, family, school, business and community situations with adequate reading skills. They do know how to read. However, as the title of an article in the *Reading Research Quarterly* so aptly declares, "Sometimes adults miss the main ideas in text and do not realize it..." (Pressley, Ghhatala, Woloshy & Pirie, 1990). Adults' confidence in their reading abilities may be misplaced when they are given materials outside their range of interest or without introduction to and focus on the main point.

Because of their maturity, experience in reading a variety of texts, and problem-solving abilities, adult readers (generally those over twenty-five) are often expected to be well-equipped to approach reading tasks with highly developed strategies, conscious reading techniques, and automatic processing skills. They are expected to be able to bring to the reading task a variety of skills and tools to help them decode texts, predict, access background knowledge, monitor comprehension, adjust strategies, and make and verify inferences. In actual classes, however, adults like Joe do not always (sometimes not even often) display such sophisticated reading ability. They may have limited reading experience, they may lack automatic processing skills, or they may have internalized unproductive reading habits and inaccurate models of the reading process. Whatever the cause, and despite the teachers' expectations, these students often need help improving their reading skills.

This latter group of adults are prime candidates for being trained to use metacognitive reading strategies. Adults who come back to school after several years' stop-out, or adults who never learned how to internalize concepts at any point in school, virtually never receive instruction in how to do that. For them, the process of reading consists of passing their eyes over the page, and perhaps hearing the words pronounced in their

minds, but it does not include coming away from a text with an internalized concept of the author's thesis and main evidence. Moreover, college students are not *taught* how to develop those internalized concepts. If they did not learn to do so before entering college, they may be seriously at risk in their first few classes because such courses assume that the participants can perform that task.

Since mature readers have the ability to examine their own reading practices, and since they already have a range of language skills, they can benefit more directly than children from this kind of instruction. By highlighting several key factors present in adult reading, and correlating them with reading theory and the use of metacognitive strategies, this paper illustrates two points: (1) the benefits adults can derive from metacognitive strategy training, and (2) the ways that teachers, tutors and facilitators—even those not trained in the teaching of reading—can reinforce the use of metacognitive strategies in a variety of situations. Such training will make students more efficient and conscious readers and more aware of their own learning and processing habits.

Although the term "metacognitive" will be parsed more fully in a later section, the general definition that applies throughout this paper is that metacognition is "above" or "over" or "behind" knowledge. It refers to a way of knowing that can explore and/or regulate any behavior or process that we are conscious of or that we can identify. Metacognition also may be understood as the knowledge and the potential for control that we have over our ways of knowing and acting. For example, when we become cognizant of the fact that reading the preface to a book can help us get important information, we can change our behavior or process and always read the preface of each book we take up.

Of course, such changes in behavior are not automatic. We have to be motivated to change our processes and to improve our reading comprehension. Unlike children, who are just learning to read and are struggling with the "bottom-up" processes of decoding letter symbols, connecting sounds and symbols, recognizing basic whole words, seeing phrasing patterns, etc., adults have already internalized those "bottom-up" strategies and can concentrate more easily on an understanding of their own reading processes and strategies. This paper explains both the theoretical foundations for, and the specific implementation of, a program for

teaching metacognitive reading strategies in any classroom. The program is designed to be well integrated with, rather than distract students from, the content area. The argument for this program includes the following sections:

- Defining Key Terms
- Setting Goals to Teach Reading Across the Curriculum
- Conducting Research That Supports the Teaching of Metacognitive Strategies
- Applying Metacognitive Strategy Training to Adult Learners
- Demonstrating How Adults Can Quickly Benefit from Metacognitive Strategy Training
- Teaching Metacognitive Strategies
- Determining Which Strategies to Teach

Defining Key Terms

Since this paper uses some technical terms that have rather concrete and specific meanings, a set of definitions is needed to ensure that their meanings are clearly delineated. The following are the most frequently used terms in this presentation:

metacognition: knowledge of one's own beliefs, behavior, and ways of knowing. For example, students who are aware of their own learning style, needs for audio or visual input, and needs for structure or freedom have high levels of metacognition about their own ways of knowing.

metacognitive: adjective used to describe actions, behaviors, and/or strategies that are planned. They involve thinking, monitoring, knowing a direction, and making conscious choices and adjustments. The example given above, about changing one's reading habits to read the preface of every book, demonstrates a metacognitive strategy.

skills: automatic behaviors and processes people use without much conscious thought or selection. For example, recognition of letters of the alphabet is an automatic skill for most native English speakers when they are reading English. For example, they do not have to think through each word by saying to themselves, "the first letter is 'b,' the second is 'o,' and the third is 'y.' That must be 'boy.'" Increasingly automated skills (also referred to as automaticity) characterize readers from the earliest stages of reading to the most advanced stages. Excellent readers often are those whose processes are quite automatic (teachers tend to fall into this group), and because these processes are so automatic, readers may not have much conscious awareness of the ways they monitor, adjust, shape and direct those processes.

strategies: behaviors that are consciously and deliberately selected in order to complete a task, accomplish a goal, or reach a conclusion. Conscious decisions to outline a chapter, write out study questions, or use other techniques to get greater comprehension from reading are strategies.

Setting Goals to Teach Reading Across the Curriculum

The goal of developing more conscious, efficient, critical, adaptable, and independent readers is the responsibility of all classroom teachers. In advanced classes, the need may not be as great since students have survived one or two years of college work. But general and introductory courses in some universities are often populated with students whose reading skills are either rusty, because they are returning after some years out of academe, or not well developed, because of gaps in their earlier education. While it is easy for teachers to say, "that's their problem—not mine," it is also easy to provide some help to students, who can quickly benefit from and use their new skills and strategies to unlock their potential and succeed at their academic work.

Students like Joe, or like the one who said to me after class one day, "Well, I *thought* I knew how to read, but today I found out that I really don't read the way I need to in order to be successful in college classes,"

these students will benefit from metacognitive training in their basic courses. Freeing their potential is the instructor's own reward for a little attention to reading in the classroom.

Conducting Research That Supports the Teaching of Metacognitive Strategies

Current research on metacognitive reading strategies (strategies that we are conscious of and that we are able to monitor and adjust) offers classroom teachers ways to enhance students' reading abilities without an undue commitment of class time or teacher training. The teaching of metacognitive strategies is everyone's responsibility, not just that of the elementary school or middle school teacher. At the university level, when adults return to school after years in the work force, such training is appropriate, effective, and important. Like writing-across-the-curriculum programs in which all teachers emphasize writing, creating better readers is the responsibility of all teachers. Metacognitive training can unlock the students' potential and empower them to be successful readers in new subjects and disciplines, new levels of theoretical materials, and in a wider variety of reading tasks and situations.

Articles reporting the teaching of direct reading comprehension strategies in native language reading appeared regularly during the 1980s (Brown, 1981; Brown, Campione, & Day, 1981; Brown & Palincsar, 1982; Brown, Palincsar, & Armbruster, 1984; Cook & Mayer, 1983). These studies found that simply teaching the definitions of strategies did not always give students the amount of control over the reading process that they needed to improve significantly. Rumelhart (1985) and Baker and Brown (1984), working respectively on schema theory and the two major dimensions of metacognition, introduced these topics to a wider circle of experts. Garner's *Metacognition and Reading Comprehension* (1987) built on that earlier work and soon became a standard reference for those addressing these topics. Studies of the use of metacognition in reading comprehension helped explain a number of differences between poor and good readers. All readers use reading strategies; however, those who employ different strategies to fit various skills to different tasks rather than using one strategy over and over (e.g., reading and rereading a

passage) are more efficient readers. Good readers use more strategies, use them more often, and can switch from one strategy to another when appropriate (Devine, 1987).

Subsequently, researchers began to replicate studies, to point out the connections between general metacognitive language learning strategies and metacognitive reading strategies, and to apply the theory to second language reading. As work continued on this topic, researchers realized that simply identifying which strategies they were using did not enhance students' reading comprehension as much as having the ability to evaluate regularly the success of their strategies, recognize when there were problems, and adjust strategies when the situation demanded. By 1991, Grabe states that "the ability to use metacognitive skills effectively is widely recognized as a critical component of skilled reading" (382). The 1990s have occasioned an exponential expansion of articles about the value of metacognitive strategy training and the methods that work best for conducting such training.

Teaching metacognition has been a major research focus in the field of English as a Second Language (ESL) since immigrants need to learn English as quickly as possible. Work by Carrell, Pharis and Liberto (1989) illustrates that college level ESL students benefit greatly from metacognitive strategy training. Working with native speakers of English, Rachel Grant (1994) spells out a whole program for "at risk" college students that includes informed training, modeling and scaffolding, self-monitoring and evaluation, practice, and transfer. Grant argues that many students need explicit instruction to help them "internalize concepts" and to understand the "strategic nature" of reading (1994, 42-48). A number of macro-strategies have been developed, usually identified by their acronyms, which provide structured learning systems (see appendix C).

Demonstrating How Adults Can Quickly Benefit from Metacognitive Strategy Training

The Pressley, *et al.* (1990) article about adults missing the main idea has an important subtitle: "Confidence in responses to short-answer and multiple-choice comprehension questions." The authors were interested not only in the comprehension levels of adult students, but also in the

confidence students felt about their answers to short-answer and multiple-choice comprehension questions. Their study illustrates that adults who had low comprehension were still quite confident about their answers. Somewhat like "Joe" in the opening illustration, they knew what they expected to find and were confident about their understanding of the author's points.

Because adult readers do tend to be confident, they are quite distressed when they find their understanding to be faulty. On the other hand, adult learners are excellent candidates for metacognitive strategy instruction because of their life experience, their ability to conceptualize, and their experience with transferring skills from school to job to home to community. Moreover, researchers in adult education have identified a number of basic values held by adult readers that are particularly well-served by the teaching of metacognitive strategy training. Hansen and Koziol (1994) argue that adult learners especially value the following conditions:

- having some control over what and how they learn
- seeing connections between their past experience and their present learning
- feeling enriched by the learning
- having satisfying social and intellectual experiences through group and cooperative learning exercises (20)

Giving adult students conscious control over their reading and comprehension strategies is the major goal of teaching them metacognitive strategies. They need to know the most efficient and practical ways to deal with extensive reading assignments in high-level, theoretical texts. Better reading comprehension leads to three results. First, clearer comprehension enhances students' ability to connect the reading to their own lives; second, it makes them feel more confident about their understanding and thus enrich their knowledge; and, third, it helps them engage in group learning activities more fully and learn more from them. Although I have found no empirical studies to support this hypothesis, years of teaching returning adults have led me to believe that students without efficient reading comprehension and strategies often don't bother to read a

text because they know they will get the main ideas from class discussion—and get them faster than struggling to tease them out of a long text. Moreover, they are probably correct in their assumption, given their reading abilities. As a result, they are dependent on others—either instructors or other students—to identify those main ideas and seldom gain the ability to do that work on their own. Thus, they may never become independent readers.

There is research, however, to support the hypothesis that readers who are given cognitive strategy training, and who are further trained to have metacognitive control over their reading tasks, become more efficient, confident, and capable readers (Carrell, Pharis & Libreto, 1989). They can internalize main ideas because they have been taught to identify the main points and to develop strategies (writing them out, note-taking, list-making, etc.) to commit those ideas to memory (Applegate, Quinn & Applegate, 1994; Garner, 1987; Grant, 1994; Pressley,*et al.*, 1995).

Teaching Metacognitive Strategies

Techniques for teaching metacognitive strategies, ones that can be used in adult classes by teachers of *any* subject in *any* discipline, are the way to reinforce good reading habits and to avoid poor reading habits. This work is analogous to writing-across-the curriculum programs, which emphasize that good writing is necessary in every class, every discipline, every situation—not just in writing classes. Likewise, a variety of conscious, flexible, and well-monitored reading strategies will enhance students' work in all classes and situations.

As reading researchers have focused on the metacognitive reading strategies that readers employ, teachers have concurrently developed techniques for teaching these strategies to adults. The practical application of research on metacognitive strategies has already been tested by volunteer literacy groups and community organizations. This survey may raise students' awareness of reading strategies.

An inventory to pique students' metacognitive awareness

(Adapted from Miholic, 1994)

1. What do you do if you encounter a word and you don't know what it means?
   + a. Use the words around it to figure it out.
   + b. Use an outside source, such as a dictionary or expert.
   + c. Temporarily ignore it and wait for clarification.
   – d. Sound it out.
2. What do you do if you don't know what an entire sentence means?
   + a. Read it again.
   – b. Sound out all the difficult words.
   + c. Think about the other sentences in the paragraph.
   – d. Disregard it completely.
3. If you are reading science or social studies material, what would you do to remember the important information you've read?
   – a. Skip parts you don't understand.
   + b. Ask yourself questions about the important ideas.
   + c. Realize you need to remember one point rather than another.
   + d. Relate it to something you already know.
4. Before you start to read, what kind of plans do you make to help you read better?
   – a. No specific plan is needed; just start reading toward completion of the assignment.
   + b. Think about what you know about the subject.
   + c. Think about why you are reading that text.
5. As you read a textbook, which of these do you do?
   + a. Adjust your pace depending on the difficulty of the material.
   – b. Generally, read at a constant, steady pace.
   – c. Skip the part you don't understand.
   + d. Continually make predictions about what you are reading.
6. While you read, which of these are important?
   + a. Know when you know and when you don't know key ideas.
   + b. Compare what you already know about the topic with what you are reading.
   – c. Keep re-reading the parts you don't understand.
   + d. Try different strategies to help you understand a text.

Teachers interested in embedding reading in their content courses could begin by reviewing this survey, thinking about their own reading proc-

esses, and discussing with other colleagues the strategies that are marked useful and not useful. Which strategies do they use? Why are some useful and others not so useful? Do they use any strategies that are not useful? Only teachers who are aware of their own reading processes are able to identify students' needs and problems with reading. That awareness begins with self-examination.

The next step is to present students with a short survey similar to the one above, but without the plus and minus signs. It takes only moments to answer the questions and a short discussion of their answers—no more than ten minutes—will establish the importance of thinking about reading. Instructors who establish early in the course that efficient reading is a part of the students' work in the class will then be able to integrate five- and ten-minute discussions of reading, reading strategies, comprehension monitoring, and metacognitive strategy use throughout the course.

Determining Which Strategies to Teach

The metacognitive strategies that all of us can teach in our regular classes, across the curriculum, focus on comprehension monitoring. Dole, *et al.* (1991) argue that there are three basic criteria for selecting which strategies to teach. First, the strategy needs to be consistent with a cognitive explanation of the reading process. Second, the strategy must be appropriate for the level and age of the learners. Third, the strategy must be proven to be teachable. The biology teacher (or teacher of history, math, women's studies, political science, etc.) does not need to become a teacher of reading skills such as skimming, scanning, or guessing words from context (see Appendix A for a full list of reading skills). Nor does the teacher have to research cognitive explanations of the reading process. The teacher, however, can become more aware of his/her own reading processes and strategies (see Appendix B) that constitute the conscious and unconscious behaviors used by skilled readers. Self-questioning is a crucial first step: Do you have questions in mind as you begin to read? Do you stop and talk to yourself when the going gets tough? Do you backtrack when something doesn't make sense? How did you know it didn't make sense? What was the clue that made you backtrack? If you do any of these things, you are using metacognitive strategies.

Finally, the instructor can use the four major techniques below, applied for five or ten minutes per week throughout the term, to train students to use metacognitive strategies and to improve reading comprehension and efficiency.

Metacognitive Strategy Training

- Make the **discussion** of reading a part of class at least once a week (use the "metacognitive awareness" survey early in the term)
- Provide teacher **modeling** of the reading process (also called think aloud protocols)
- **Explain, illustrate,** and encourage students to use the following:
  - ✓ question formation (before, during, and after reading)
  - ✓ recognizing key words and thesis statements
  - ✓ minimal and useful text marking, list making, annotation, outlining
  - ✓ comprehension monitoring
  - ✓ metacognitive control (monitoring) of strategy use
- Have students **explore** their own models of the reading process

The following discussion of each of these steps, and the appendices at the end of this chapter, provide the basic information necessary to incorporate the teaching of metacognitive strategy use into the college classroom.

Discussion of reading

A discussion of the importance of careful reading can begin with the first reading assignment. Assure students that you will be giving them help with reading strategies and comprehension monitoring throughout the semester. Ask them to begin thinking about their own reading—what they enjoy, what is challenging for them, what past successes and problems they have had. Early in the term, have the students fill out the "metacognitive awareness" survey and spend five or ten minutes of class time discussing their responses. Throughout the term, select difficult (ambiguous, contradictory, abstract, or dense) passages for discussion, not only to review the content but also to highlight the reading problems that

students may have had with it. An ongoing dialog about reading, about metacognitive strategies, and about comprehension monitoring will heighten students' awareness and help them become better readers.

Modeling the reading process

Modeling reading (or think-aloud protocol) consists of the oral presentation of the thinking, questions and dialogue that go on in our heads when we are reading. As we read, we usually think about the material being presented to us. Is it new? Is it difficult to understand? Are there new words? Is the author clear about the main points? Are there enough examples? Providing a model of the kind of thinking that goes on in the mind of a skilled, or even a not-so-skilled reader, is helpful to students who simply pass their eyes over the material and retain very little of it the minute they stop reading. The following three examples of think-aloud protocols are based on texts from a scientific publication, an anthropology book, and a short story. Each is developed in some detail and discussed so that the idea of think-alouds is rendered in precise and clear illustrations.

The following paragraph from a recent issue of *Science News* (written for the educated public) is one that gave me trouble:

> The gene, described in the Oct. 30 *Nature*, encodes a dynein, a protein that forms huge complexes which can serve as molecular motors. Dynein complexes usually interact with long intracellular rods called microtubules, transporting cargo along them or bending them. (Travis, 1997, 311)

My own think-aloud protocol for the above passage (my training is in the humanities) would go something like this:

1. Think aloud protocol (**text in small type**; think aloud in regular)

The gene,

well, it looks like this about DNA, genes, biology—I don't know much about that stuff. But I did read *The Double Helix,* maybe that will help. I don't know what to predict here, and don't have much background knowledge.

described in the Oct. 30 *Nature*,

Hmmmm—I don't usually read *Nature,* it is too technical for someone with my training. Hope this is easier.

encodes a dynein,

Egad, what's a "dynein?" Never heard of such a thing. And the gene encodes it. Does that mean it gives it a code? Gives it information? But what's a dynein? Etc., etc.

a protein that forms huge complexes which can serve as molecular motors.

Ah, there's the definition given just after the word. It's a protein, and it forms big groups or complexes, and it can function as something that gives energy to molecules—I think.

My own queries in the think-aloud helped me understand a little more of the text, even though my comprehension is certainly not as thorough as that of someone in the field of molecular biology. Every teacher should try this kind of exercise, at least once with a text that is very difficult to read. Check and see which strategies you use, how you puzzle out meaning, what keeps you going or makes you give up. Learning about one's own reading processes is central to helping others read better, and the

only way to learn is to tackle a passage out of our discipline or too technical or difficult for us.

Scientific concepts and technical terms are not the only stumbling blocks. Abstract concepts, allusions to unknown events or works, and implied concepts are also difficult for the slower, less widely-read student. In the text below from an anthropology book there are implied meanings, allusions, abstract terms, and a number of other stylistic techniques that impede reading for the less skilled:

> Several years ago a minor scandal erupted in anthropology: one of its ancestral figures told the truth in a public place. As befits an ancestor, he did it posthumously, and through his widow's decision rather than his own, with the result that a number of the sort of right-thinking types who are with us always immediately rose to cry that she, an in-marrier anyway, had betrayed clan secrets, profaned an idol, and let down the side. What will the children think, to say nothing of the layman? . . . In much the same fashion as James Watson's *The Double Helix* exposed the way in which biophysics in fact gets done, Bronislaw Malinowski's *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term* rendered established accounts of how anthropologists work fairly well implausible. The myth of the chameleon fieldworker, perfectly self-tuned to his exotic surroundings, a walking miracle of empathy, tact, patience, and cosmopolitanism, was demolished by the man who had perhaps done most to create it. (Geertz 1983, 55-56)

The length of the second sentence, the reference to those who are "always with us," the irony, the comparison to Watson's *Double Helix,* the joke on Malinowski—all of these will be missed or will create stumbling blocks for the less proficient reader. While a teacher may see the main point of this passage without much trouble, the students whose comprehension monitoring skills are weak, who read slowly, who have trouble with long sentences, or who fail to adjust to matters of tone or irony, may retain very little from this paragraph. Their think-alouds reveal where they go astray and what clues they don't pick up. One might sound like this:

2. Student Think-Aloud (**text in small type**; think-aloud in regular)

Several years ago a minor scandal erupted in anthropology: one of its ancestral figures told the truth in a public place.

Well, what's so bad about telling the truth in public? And who is the ancestral figure? Don't know what the topic of this piece is—I guess it's about a scandal.

As befits an ancestor, he did it posthumously, and through his widow's decision rather than his own,

So, what is "posthumously?" Then it says, "his widow"? He's dead? Of course he can't make a decision when he's dead. Is that the scandal?

with the result that a number of the sort of right-thinking types who are with us always immediately rose to cry that she, an in-marrier anyway, had betrayed clan secrets, profaned an idol, and let down the side. What will the children think, to say nothing of the layman?

Now, what happened? Who are "the children," "the ancestor," "the layman"? Where did they come from? Why are some always with us? Doesn't make sense. And why didn't the ancestor decide? Must have been juicy—all those secrets let out! What does it mean to be an in-marrier? Is it something military? Was there a fight and someone "let down the side." This doesn't make any sense.

...Bronislaw Malinowski's *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term* rendered established accounts of how anthropologists work fairly well implausible.

So, this Malinowski gave established accounts of how they work. What's implausible? And what is the scandal? Seems pretty boring to me.

This student is completely lost. Vocabulary like "implausible," expressions like "revealed clan secrets," or "profaned an idol" have confused rather than developed the topic. The assumption that the "scandal" is the topic of the paragraph, since it was unchallenged by the reader later in the text, was misleading. There is no hope for this student to tease out the meaning of such a paragraph without first learning better reading strategies and comprehension monitoring strategies.

The Geertz passage is, admittedly, difficult. Students, however, have trouble even with passages that do not have abstract concepts, long sentences, or frequent allusions. A passage with very simple words, particularly when the text is poetry or fiction, can perplex students with poor comprehension monitoring skills. For example, consider the first few lines from Grace Paley's short story, "Wants":

> I saw my ex-husband in the street. I was sitting on the steps of the new library.
>
> Hello, my life, I said. We had once been married for twenty-seven years, so I felt justified.
>
> He said, What? What life? No life of mine.
>
> I said, O.K. I don't argue when there's real disagreement. I got up and went into the library to see how much I owed them.
>
> The librarian said $32 even and you've owed it for eighteen years. I didn't deny anything. Because I don't understand how time passes. I have had those books. I have often thought of them. The library is only two blocks away. (Howe & Howe 1983, 171-173)

The entire story is an internal dialogue, and it is only two-and-a-half pages long. There is no plot or action. The story lacks quotation marks to indicate the exact words of the speakers. It makes references to past events that the reader is not aware of, and it lacks some of the traditional elements of a narrative. While it swiftly builds a portrait of the character of the speaker and reveals a great deal about her 'wants,' the student looking for the "story" in these paragraphs will flounder, as in the think-aloud given here:

3. Think aloud for fiction (**text in small type**; think-aloud in regular)

I saw my ex-husband in the street. I was sitting on the steps of the new library. Hello, my life, I said. We had once been married for twenty-seven years, so I felt justified.

Well, it is a woman speaking, and she was married to a guy for 27 years. So, why does she call him 'my life?' Not sure what she means by 'feeling justified.'

He said, What? What life? No life of mine.

Guess he doesn't like to be called that. Why? Wasn't it 27 years of his life, too?

I said, O.K. I don't argue when there's real disagreement.

Doesn't argue when there's real disagreement!! Why not? That's when you have to argue. Maybe she's afraid of him? Was he mean to her?

I got up and went into the library to see how much I owed them.

Strange she doesn't keep on talking to him, especially after calling him 'my life.' Maybe she's worried about the library fine.

The librarian said $32 even and you've owed it for eighteen years. I didn't deny anything. Because I don't understand how time passes. I have had those books. I have often thought of them. The library is only two blocks away.

Thirty-two dollars! Eighteen years! Maybe this woman is sick or crazy. Maybe that's why the ex-husband treats her like he does. Says she doesn't understand how time passes? Well, maybe when you're busy or having fun. But for eighteen years???? Well, it doesn't pass very fast trying to figure out this story. And the library is only two blocks away? Weird! So, what is the point of this story? What's it about? I don't have a clue.

The student is asking some good questions here, but not stopping to answer them or to think about the picture of the woman being sketched with words. The pieces of the description are not connected to each other;

conflicting evidence does not get the reader to stop and try to reconcile the conflict. The student understands all the *words* in this passage, but not the *meaning*. Davey (1983) argues that students often approach a text as words that need to be recognized rather than as a message to be *understood.*

When students hear the questions, dialogue, associations, and implied strategies you use as you provide a "think-aloud" for an unfamiliar text, even one as easy as the one above, they can begin to model their reading on a similar kind of process, with constant checking, monitoring, and building comprehension processes. Doing so will give them the tools to understand any kind of text and the strategies to know when they do or do not understand the overall meaning.

Explain and illustrate metacognitive strategies

Pressley, *et al,* (1995) provide an overview of how to teach metacognitive strategies that includes these main points:

- Teach only one strategy at a time until students are used to the idea of strategy use; later, focus on only a few strategies at a time so that students won't be confused.
- Model, explain, model again, and re-explain the use of strategies; student have to construct their own model of what strategies are and how to use them.
- Explain when and where to use strategies.
- Encourage practice of and discussion of reading strategies.
- Encourage students to monitor how they are doing when they are using strategies.
- Increase student motivation to use strategies by making them aware of how useful these strategies are in other classes and other contexts.
- Emphasize reflective processing of a text rather than speedy processing; try to reduce high anxiety in students. (12)

Question formation (before, during, and after reading) is one of the most effective, easily taught, and easily practiced metacognitive strategies

for students to learn. It only takes three or four minutes to model for students the questions you would ask before starting to read a chapter in their textbook, an article to be summarized, or any reading text which you are using in class (including fiction, short stories, poetry, and drama). An example of this kind of question-formation modeling would look like this:

4. Pre-reading strategies

> Professor: For Thursday's class you need to read Chapter Six in our textbook. Here are some pre-reading tips to help you get the most out of the reading:
>
> Consider the title of the chapter: What do you think the chapter will include? How is this chapter connected to earlier chapters? List three questions which you hope this chapter will answer.
>
> Read the first and the last paragraph in the chapter: What seem to be the key points? Is the author's thesis stated explicitly?
>
> Note the headings and subheadings in the chapter: Do they provide an outline of the key points? List three kinds of information that you hope to get from of the three major headings.

Recognizing key words and thesis statements is crucial to good reading comprehension. One way to focus on key words and thesis statements is through pre-reading exercises, as in the box above. More formal ways may include having students write out and turn in the thesis of a chapter or article, make a list of one or two key words in every paragraph, or having students write a brief outline of the main argument.

Minimal but still useful text marking is a strategy that most students believe they practice regularly. However, a glance at students' textbooks often reveals heavily highlighted texts with as much as 50% to 75% of the page in fluorescent yellow or pink. Students who highlight so copiously are not able to sort out the major and minor points. A few minutes of discussion of headings, main points, minor points, details and illustrations will get students to think about these distinctions. There are several quick techniques that the instructor can introduce that will help students distin-

guish between levels of text importance. One system is presented in Appendix D. However, simply using two colors, one for thesis and major points and another for minor points, is useful. The color for major points should appear on no more than a few lines, at most, on any given page.

Comprehension monitoring consists of using a set of behaviors that provide systematic feedback on one's comprehension of text. It is an active thinking process that demands checking with oneself to monitor the progression of the argument, the way the examples illustrate the points, the connections between parts of the argument, and the connections between this argument and the thesis of the whole book or article. Metacognitive control (monitoring) of strategy use is usually an automatic process for good readers, except when they try to read something in a different discipline or of great technical or theoretical complexity. Students who do not have good comprehension can learn these strategies and learn to monitor or control their comprehension by developing such a system.

Student exploration of the reading process

Throughout the semester, students can also think about and talk to each other about their own reading strategies, comprehension, strengths, and weaknesses. Spending the first five minutes of class on comprehension monitoring in a difficult chapter may help all students retain more when they read future chapters. Students can also engage in any of the following activities and be required to submit a one-page, double-spaced commentary on their own reading somewhere near the end of the term:

- list strategies they use
- reflect on which strategies work best in which situations
- discuss with another student how they adapt and change strategies
- make a list of the strategies they used in reading a difficult passage or chapter

Conclusion

As teachers, including university teachers, we need to be sure that our students are *learning*. If they are not reading efficiently and with good comprehension, they are not learning well and we are not teaching well. The goal of teaching reading across the curriculum is arguably not as demanding and difficult to achieve as the goal of teaching writing across the curriculum. There is no burden of extra papers to read carefully, not much class time needed to enhance reading awareness, and the results may be more than you or the students can anticipate. The five appendices following this chapter include the basic information a teacher needs in order to begin to teach metacognitive strategies. Don't try to do too much too soon. Test out a short exercise, such as the survey of strategies. Engage students in some talk about their reading. See what happens. Each teacher will need to find her/his comfort zone with this material. Try it at home with your children, or in a study group or other setting. While individual teachers may work more or less explicitly on metacognitive strategies and comprehension monitoring, the cumulative effect on students of having *every* teacher focus on these reading issues in class will be both powerful and empowering.

APPENDICES

A: List of micro-reading skills

B: Macro reading strategies, clusters or groups of strategies used before, during, and after reading

C: Macro-strategy systems

D: Text highlighting systems

APPENDIX A

List of micro-reading skills

(Adapted from Field, Anderson, Carrell, 1997; see also Barnett, 1989; Carrell, *et al.*, 1989; Grellett, 1984; Hosenfeld, *et al.*, 1981; Janzen, 1996; Kletzien, 1991; Mikulesky, 1990; Olshavsky, 1976-77; Pressley, *et al.*, 1995)

- skip an unknown word
- ask someone about word meaning
- look up an unknown word in the dictionary
- guess at the meaning of an unknown word
- skim for general understanding
- use text features (titles, subheadings, transitions, etc., to infer what may follow)
- note key word(s) in the first sentences of the paragraph or text
- recognize a thesis or topic sentence
- make inferences and then verify inferences
- predict what will come next and then confirm the prediction
- distinguish main ideas from minor ideas
- recognize (state) comprehension failure
- formulate questions
- paraphrase
- interact with the text by constructing visual images of what is described in it
- relate information in the text to your own personal experience

- re-read sections of the text
- recognize an indication of a change in topic
- use context to build meaning and aid comprehension
- tolerate ambiguity in a text (at least temporarily)
- understand the relationships between the parts of a text
- scan for a specific idea or topic or work
- analyze the grammatical functions of unfamiliar words—e.g., is this word a noun or an adjective? What does it refer to?
- analyze words by dividing them into parts
- use background knowledge or recognize a lack of background knowledge
- refer to prior section of the text
- refer to other text(s)

APPENDIX B

Macro reading strategies, clusters or groups of strategies used before, during, and after reading

(Adapted from Field, Anderson, & Carrell, 1997)

- survey each paragraph to find key words and main points
- set questions to be answered by reading
- recognize top-level rhetorical structure
- use text-mapping techniques
- create a flowchart of main ideas
- write a plot summary (limited to narrative texts)
- use schema mapping
- show relationships among key words by using a semantic map
- mark places in the text to stop and monitor comprehension
- adjust reading strategies to fit the purposes for reading

APPENDIX C

Macrostrategy systems

(See Barnitz, 1985 and Nuttall, 1996 for overall discussions)

DRTA: Directed Reading Thinking Activity (Stauffer, 1980)

ETR: Experience-text-relationship method (Au, 1979)

LEA: Language Experience Approach (Dixon & Nessel, 1983)

LETME: Linking, extracting, transforming, monitoring, extending (Shenkman & Cukras, 1986)

SCROL: Survey, connect, read, outline, look back (Grant, 1994)

SQ3R: Survey-Question-Read-Recite-Review (Barnitz, 1985)

APPENDIX D

Highlighting systems

- distinguish between major points, minor points, and illustrations of each
- use two colors of highlighting pens—one for major and one for minor points
- write notes in the margin about other books, articles, lectures, etc., which are related to the information you are reading
- Use Frazier's Textmarking Procedure: (Frazier, 1993)

  summarize

  enumerate

  draw graphic aids

  self-test

  clarify ideas

  underline

  use personalized coding

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African American English (AAE) as an Instructional Resource for Teachers of African American Adults

Talmadge C. Guy

Introduction

Illiteracy is an immense problem for America today. The National Adult Literacy Survey conducted by the Educational Testing Service estimated that as many as 44 million adult Americans have problems reading and performing basic literacy or numeracy tasks required for ordinary living and job performance (National Adult Literacy Survey, 1992). While the survey data suggest a problem of national proportions affecting all Americans, the situation relative to African Americans is even more distressing. For example, African Americans are outperformed on the prose literacy measure by Whites and even by Hispanic Americans of other than Latin American origin (Quigley, 1997).

This situation is exacerbated by the widely held conclusion that literacy programs simply do not seem to be effective in lowering the rate of adult illiteracy, thereby improving the life chances of literacy learners (Beder, 1991). While there are many exemplary adult literacy programs, discovering what helps African American adult literacy learners is a difficult task. It is difficult not because we lack models or examples. Rather, it is difficult because literacy itself is such a multidimensional phenomenon, requiring an in-depth understanding of the learner and the sociocultural context within which literacy skills are required. A growing body of literature points to factors like social class, culture, race, or gender that largely influence if not determine the distribution of literacy in America. However, there is very little research that addresses the question of what works well for adults in literacy education.

I argue that culturally relevant adult literacy education is central to effectively working with African American adults who are speakers of AAE. I draw from two distinct but philosophically compatible traditions in educational research: research on bidialectal approaches to language instruction, and research on critical pedagogy and empowerment. I propose that culturally relevant education offers a promising approach that adult literacy educators ought to employ in serving African American adult learners. Moreover, because literacy learning is essentially about situationally and culturally appropriate language use, African American

English (AAE)[1] constitutes an essential tool for teaching standard English literacy.

To advance this argument, I present information about African American literacy achievement. This is followed by a discussion of the complex nature of literacy and the central place of culture in understanding what literacy is. The next section of the paper presents the cultural context of literacy among African Americans. This will provide a cultural and historical lens through which to understand the cultural issues embedded in literacy education for African Americans. I conclude with a discussion of culturally relevant approaches to teaching literacy that focuses on African American culture and language.

African American Educational Achievement and Participation in Literacy Education

Advancement in the educational level of African Americans has been remarkable in this century. At the turn of the century fewer than 20% of African Americans had any kind of secondary education. By 1990, over 80% of 20- to 24-year-olds had completed high school (Scott-Jones, 1995). However, despite increased school completion rates, African Americans continue to lag behind Whites in terms of school completion. While African American school completion rates had risen to more than 80% in 1990, the comparable rate for Whites remained at almost 90% (Hacker, 1992). Among African Americans, females complete high school at higher rates than males (Reed, 1988).

Moreover, there is evidence that literacy levels lag even for those who have graduated from high school (Scott-Jones, 1995). Only 24% of African American high school graduates have completed the number of English, social studies, science and mathematics courses recommended by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (Scott-Jones). By comparison, on average, White students graduate with more units in

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[1] African American English (AAE), along with Black English and Ebonics, is one of several terms in current usage to refer to the language spoken by African Americans. While each term has its own history and political and ideological connotations, they are considered equivalent for the purposes of this paper.

growing fields like computer science, science, and math (National Center for Education Statistics, 1992). Coupled with high rates of non-school completion, particularly for inner-city and poor rural African American adults, the advancement of educational achievement must be tempered by a more sobering fact. More than one in five African American youth do not complete high school and, of those who do, most do not take the courses recommended for adequate literacy functioning in a modern, technologically sophisticated, information–based society.

According to information from the United States Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics (as cited in Martin, 1991), African American participation in adult literacy is well below the necessary level for such programs. This means that the problems of non-school completion and low literacy levels are not being met satisfactorily through existing literacy programming channels. Since these data were published, two developments have significantly affected African American participation in adult literacy. One is related to welfare reform and the other is related to incarceration rates of African American males. As Table I illustrates, based on the percentage of African Americans in the United States, fewer than 8% of those African American adults eligible participated in 1986 in the adult basic education programs authorized by the Federal Adult Education Act, the year for which the most recent data are available.

Following the passage of the 1988 Family Support Act, welfare reform at the state and federal levels brought tighter restrictions on welfare eligibility. Many general assistance and AFDC recipients were threatened with reduced benefits or dismissed from the welfare rolls if they did not actively seek employment or enroll in an adult education program.

The intent of this impetus to reform welfare was to remove individuals and families from welfare by requiring that able-bodied adults earn their living through productive work. Since many welfare recipients did not possess the job skills to qualify for or to retain employment, adult education in the form of literacy, GED, and job training was required. Many welfare recipients found themselves involuntarily enrolled in adult education classes. With the passage of the 1996 Welfare Reform Act signed by President Clinton, fewer referrals to education has re-

Table 1: Participation in adult education by race/ethnicity (In 000's)
[Source: National Center for Educational Statistics][2]

Ethnic Group	Target Population Level I	ABE Participants Level I 1985-86	Rate (%)	Target Population Level II	ABE Participants Level II 1985-86	Rate (%)	Avg. rate (%)
African American	3,054	314	10.3	3,689	181	4.9	7.34
Hispanic	3,690	806	21.8	2,039	142	7.0	16.55
White	16,772	648	3.9	18,108	479	27.0	3.23
Total	23,516	1,768	7.5	23,836	802	3.4	5.42

sulted in a decline in the numbers of African American adults referred to adult education programs through the welfare system. Whereas adult education was previously seen as a means to equip welfare recipients for employment, adult education was now seen as an unnecessary detour from finding employment. Welfare reform at the national level has begun to lead to the diminishment of adult education opportunities for African American adults who previously might have taken literacy courses through welfare-sponsored or associated programs. The general development in this area is that welfare rolls have been cut back and work-based welfare has increased. Welfare clients are spending less time than before in educational programs intended to increase skills for workplace employment.

The second development concerns the increasing rate of incarceration of African American males over the past 15 years. With the increase in jail sentences given by judges, and the increase in the number of mandatory jail sentences required by state legislatures, the incarceration rate

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[2] From "Facilitating cultural diversity in adult literacy programs", by L. Martin, 1991, in *Serving culturally diverse populations*. (New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers. p. 21. Copyright 1991 by Name of Jossey Bass.

of African American males has increased sharply. More and more jurisdictions are now offering adult education for prisoners as the connection is made between illiteracy, drop-out rates, and crime. Required adult education in prisons means that some African American males have access to adult literacy programs, but, on the whole, resources are not available to meet the need. Of those prisoners who are enrolled, few make any significant progress. The result of these two developments is a marginal decrease in educational opportunity for African American adults, especially those in poverty.

The Consequences of Illiteracy

Illiteracy bears an expensive price. Not having a high school diploma or General Equivalency Diploma can mean personal and economic disaster. Consider the following:

- An adult without a high school diploma earns 42% less than an adult with a high school diploma (National Center for Education Statistics, 1992, p. 384).
- High school dropouts have an unemployment rate four times greater than that of high school graduates (National Center for Education Statistics, 1992, p. 383).
- Of Fortune 500 companies, 50% underwrite remedial employee training in basic skills at an annual cost of $300 million a year Gorman, 1988, p. 57).
- Adults on welfare are less than half as likely as adults in the general populations to be employed full time (Barton & Jenkins, 1995).
- Of the nation's prison inmates, 75% do not have a high school diploma (Kirsch, Jungeblut, Jenkins, & Kolstad, 1993).
- Of all welfare recipients, 33% are not considered to be functionally literate (Barton & Jenkins, 1995).
- Of adults who scored in the lowest literacy level on the survey conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (1992), over 40% were poor according to federal poverty

guidelines, compared to about 5% of adults who scored in the highest level (Kirsch, Jungeblut, Jenkins, & Kolstad, 1993).

Individuals without basic language skills and educational credentials risk poverty, joblessness, or worse. In an era of a technological, information-based, global economy, illiteracy is tantamount to economic and political destruction. Yet the acquisition of literacy does not guarantee economic or political success. In fact, most discussions of literacy rest on the assumption that literacy is important because it leads directly to intellectual development, educational attainment, and job advancement. This assumption adopts an uncritical view of literacy. In fact, literacy is a much more complex phenomenon.

Competing Views of Literacy

When literacy educators go to work, what tacit definition of literacy do they employ? And what difference does it make to their work what definition they use? I suggest that there are three predominant views of literacy reflected in the literature that guide the work of adult literacy practitioners. Each view contains particular assumptions about how literacy is attained, who is considered literate, and how adult educators should work with literacy learners. My representation of each view is a summation of the literature in order to make important distinctions in how researchers and practitioners conceptualize and practice adult literacy. While no one author may hold all aspects of each view, it is useful to distinguish between major conceptual approaches in order to develop the argument that a sociocultural approach to literacy provides a sound theoretical framework to culturally relevant education. Consequently, each view may be thought of as a generalized orientation toward adult literacy education that is reflected in adult educational practice.

Attempts to develop a general definition of literacy have failed. In a diverse, complex, and increasingly interconnected world, literacy universals prove very elusive. In the classic *Ways with Words* (1983), Shirley Brice Heath points out that "literacy has different meanings for members of different groups, with a corresponding variety of acquisition modes, functions and uses" (p. 25). In other words, the value and mean-

ing of literacy is directly related to the needs and sociocultural context of a given group. This, however, is a relatively recent view. There exist in the minds of most literacy educators and the general public somewhat different conceptions of literacy. These different views of literacy are important to understand because they influence how educators, learners and the public view the value, structure, and process of literacy education. The following sections delineate some of the basic ideological and cultural implications for the three views of literacy: the traditional view, the functional view, and the sociocultural view.

What follows is a representation of major orientations toward the concept of literacy. This representation is a summation of the literature in order to make important distinctions in how researchers and practitioners conceptualize and practice adult literacy. While no one author may hold all aspects of each view, each view is distilled from related literature. Consequently each view may be thought of as a generalized orientation toward adult literacy education that is reflected in adult educational practice.

The Traditional View: Literacy as Learning to Read and Write

In the traditional view, literacy is seen as the simple ability to read and write standard English. Language learning is understood as a technical process involving the coding and decoding of symbols. Knowing how to read and write is treated as if it were an "autonomous" phenomenon entirely independent of social context and one that has a causal effect on cognitive development (Street, 1984). As Ong (1982) maintains, "writing presents utterance and thought as uninvolved in all else, somehow self-contained, complete" (p. 132). In other words, meaning is embedded in the writing itself. Another important assumption is the idea that literacy stimulates cognitive development. Olson (1988) suggests "there is a transition from utterance to text both culturally and developmentally and that this transition can be described as one of increasing explicitness with language increasingly able to stand as an unambiguous and autonomous representation of meaning" (p. 258).

If literacy is the simple ability to read and write, then it follows that literacy is a characteristic of individuals. Literacy is acquired through study and practice. Learning to read and write occurs independently of a student's background or culture. Being literate also means being able to process information in ways that are personally meaningful. To be literate involves gaining a measure of control over one's life. On the other hand, people who are illiterate are thought of as deficient in some important way. To be literate is to be smart, intelligent, productive, theoretical, clear, logical, and modern. Popular perceptions about illiterate people incorporate a "blame the victim" (Ryan, 1976) mentality—if someone is illiterate then something must be wrong with that individual.

The Functional View: Literacy as Reading or Writing to Perform a Particular Role

A second perspective on literacy is called functional literacy. Functional literacy conceptualizes literacy not as a unitary phenomenon but rather as the ability to manipulate language in specific and varied contexts. A primary theme is that literacy is more than just being able to read and write; it is the ability to comprehend, interpret, analyze, respond, and interact with the growing variety of complex sources of information. Each context—school, work, church, military—requires a different language competency (Sticht & Armstrong, 1996). School texts are different than work texts, which are different from other kinds of texts. This view of literacy has become the dominant view in the United States. The National Literacy Act of 1991 states that adult literacy is the "mastery of basic educational skills to enable [adults] to function effectively in society..." (U. S. Congress. House. Committee on Education and Labor, 1991).

A primary assumption of the functional literacy view is that different social situations demand different language skills. Consequently, literacy is relative (Cervero, 1985) to a particular context. Levine (1986) says that functional literacy is "the possession of, or access to, the competencies and information required to accomplish transactions entailing reading and writing which an individual wishes—or is impelled—to engage" (p. 43). Thus, the application of literacy in a particular context is

for the purpose of performing some accepted social role—most often to fulfill employment requirements in the job market (Bhola, 1995). The role is a socially approved one, requiring a more or less precise use of language to fulfill that role. By socially approved I mean that the role is restricted to working class or low-paying white-collar jobs typical of a service economy—jobs that are deemed appropriate for low-skilled, undereducated adults. The range of reasonably accessible careers for adult literacy learners is limited to manual labor, low-level service occupations, and low-paying white-collar work. The critical point is that occupational choices available to adult literacy learners are limited as compared with the choices available for high school or college students because literacy requirements for managerial, professional, and executive positions have increased (e.g., Mikulecky, 1987; Smith, 1996). To be functionally literate means that the learner has acquired the language use skills necessary to perform a pre-defined, socially approved role.

However, seldom do advocates of the functional literacy view actually critique the role(s) to which functional literacy is directed. Furthermore, there is little discussion about whether learning the language use skills is sufficient, from an economic, sociocultural, or political standpoint, to fulfill that role. For example, an African American male literacy student usually would not be taught about the racism and discrimination he might encounter as a janitor, as a carpenter apprentice, or as a trucker, even though he had attained the literacy skills necessary to perform that job. Functional literacy is supported by the ideological view that, solely through individual effort and education, a learner can achieve his or her goals. While attention is paid to the context in which language is used, no attention is paid to the cultural, political, or economic context from which the learner comes or the cultural or political context within which language itself is used. As a result, many learners acquire functional literacy skills and later encounter discrimination or exclusion from the workplace.

The functional literacy perspective offers a closer examination and understanding of the context within which language is to be used, and recognition that there are important contextual differences educators must address in literacy programs. The functional perspective overlooks that learners come to the educational setting with different experiences, perspectives, values, and beliefs. In effect, the cultural background of the

learner is viewed as peripheral to the requirements of teaching functional literacy. Nor does this perspective critically examine the social role for which literacy instruction provides preparation.

The Sociocultural View: Literacy as Cultural and Social Practice

The third perspective on literacy is the sociocultural view. From this perspective, literacy is understood as embedded in a social, political, and ideological context. Scribner and Cole argue that literacy consists of cultural practices developed in and for specific social contexts (Scribner & Cole, 1978, 1981). Literacy is acquired in collaborative social contexts—the result of shared activity as opposed to individual proficiency (Reder, 1990). According to Bernardo Ferdman (1990), one becomes literate when he or she has developed mastery of the communication processes, the symbolic media of a particular culture and the ways in which cultural norms, values, and beliefs are represented. Thus, literacy is considerably more than the ability to read a printed or written page. Literacy involves the ability to comprehend and manipulate symbols in ways prescribed by a particular culture.

However, Ferdman (1990) issues a caution: "The value placed on behaviors that are construed as literate in the context of one group will not be equivalent to the value given them by a different culture" (p. 188). Acquiring and maintaining literate behaviors in a new culture may not be easy, because basic values are not readily changed. Fingeret (1989), for example, warns against judging non-reading adults within the normative framework of a dominant, reading culture. It is a mistake to label non-reading adults "stupid" or "dumb." She instead regards non-reading adults as members of primarily oral subcultures that are rooted in concrete experience and that place importance on talk. The relative ease with which an individual acquires and maintains appropriate literate behaviors in a new culture relates closely to the similarities and dissimilarities between the home culture and the new culture.

Within the sociocultural view, to become literate involves what socio-linguist James Gee describes as the development of a secondary discourse (Gee, 1993). Gee (1990) defines discourse as "integral combina-

tions of sayings-doings-thinkings-feelings-valuings" (p. 2). Discourse is language use that reflects systems of meaning and perspective. There are two main types of discourse—primary and secondary. Primary discourse is learned at home from family and community members. Secondary discourse is learned as a result of interaction within a broader community. For example, school discourse involves expectations, norms, values and perspectives of what students and teachers should do and how they should do it; civic discourse involves expectations and norms concerning how people interact with each other in public settings; and medical discourse affects how medical professionals think, know and interact with each other.

While no one ever completely loses his or her primary discourse, many secondary discourses can be learned. In fact, the way one learns to function adequately, if not critically, within the larger society, is to learn one or more secondary discourses. Gee's view focuses our attention on the complex relationship between language and culture. Further, he stresses that literacy is involves shared ways of talking, acting, thinking, feeling, and valuing. Literacy, therefore, involves technical skill in reading, writing, and speaking, but also involves cultural knowledge about appropriate forms and means of communication.

Gee further argues that not all discourses are equal. Some discourses are privileged. Dominant discourses carry with them material benefit or advantage. Socially dominant discourses, such as standard English, involve culturally based ways not only of speaking, but also of doing and valuing. Students who become proficient in school or academic discourses reap the rewards associated with academic achievement. Professionals who excel in the discourse of their profession receive recognition and respect from members of their community. Take, for example, the case of a television news anchor. The use of standard English is accompanied by socially acceptable dress, and mainstream reaction to events and considerations of what is important. Similarly, the use of standard English in certain settings is a prerequisite for the successful negotiation of human interaction.

Now, those persons who come from home and community environments where the primary discourse closely matches a dominant secondary discourse attain an advantage not shared by those who do not. They have a head start on achieving the material and social benefits as-

sociated with dominant secondary discourse mastery. Those who come from home environments where the primary discourse is not congruent with a dominant secondary discourse, such as academic discourse, lag behind.

Another central insight about literacy is offered by Paulo Freire (1970). Freire views literacy learning as a political act in which those who are oppressed seek to reclaim some measure of control over their future. To become literate means, in part, to become conscious of the way the world is socially constructed and to act in ways that reconstruct the world consistent with one's reality. One's social class position in society often determines one's view of the world. The rich see the world quite differently than the poor. Laborers see the world differently than managers. Whites see the world differently than Blacks. So, for African American learners, literacy means becoming politically aware of one's position in the society and learning to use language to solve the problems faced by learners in racially oppressive circumstances.

Given that there are many literacies, depending on the sociocultural context, how is literacy education to be understood? The specific focus in this paper is the learning of standard English literacy among African American adults, or what Gee describes as learning a dominant secondary discourse by a culturally and racially marginalized group. Learning standard English, then, becomes learning a literacy of power (Macedo, 1994). However, learning standard English requires a critical stance toward language use and culture. For African Americans to acquire standard English proficiency requires knowledge that is culturally appropriate and involves effective language use in racially oppressive situations. To illustrate, consider the movie *48 Hours,* starring Eddie Murphy and Dan Akroyd. Murphy plays the part of a street-smart, down-on-his-luck hustler. Dan Akroyd plays the part of an upper class, sophisticated, East Coast financier who was born with the proverbial silver spoon in his mouth. Akroyd is betrayed by his two sisters' fiancées, also wealthy financiers, who arrange to have Murphy and Akroyd switch places. Murphy, using his street smarts and knowledge of gambling, learns to negotiate the futures market. As he becomes more successful, he begins to adopt the values, mannerisms, and outlook of the formerly elitist Akroyd. As Akroyd sinks deeper into poverty and despair, he eventually adopts the mannerisms and outlook of Murphy, the former street hustler.

One might characterize these personal transformations as the acquisition of a secondary discourse.

To carry the movie analogy a step further, consider the example of Richard Pryor in the movie *Critical Condition*. Pryor "learns to be" a doctor by adopting a physician's discursive presence.[3] By these examples, literacy education can be understood as involving the development of discursive competence within a particular sociocultural frame of reference. But literacy education understood simply as the transmission of specific language skills, like vocabulary development, spelling, grammar, and punctuation, that are typically taught in most adult literacy programs, will not contribute to the transformation of learners' lives.

The Three Views of Literacy: A Summary

There is a sharp distinction between the sociocultural view and the traditional and functional views. The traditional view of literacy as the ability to read and write is deeply problematic, as is the functional view of literacy. Both views mask the hegemonic relationships embedded in literacy practice. Traditional literacy and functional literacy make ambiguous any connection between the ability to manipulate the written word and the social context within which the word was created. Literacy is either treated as an autonomous, ahistorical, asocial phenomenon (Street, 1984) or it is understood as a limited set of language skills unique to the tasks associated with particular social roles (Sticht, 1990).

These reviews assume that literacy develops cognitive skills and has little or nothing to do with social relations. They disguise the cultural and political nature of literacy education and obscure the fact that literacy is closely connected to cultural identity (Ferdman, 1990), social status and political power (Freire, 1970; Stuckey, 1991; Macedo, 1994).

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[3] These fictional examples illustrate how discourse acquisition is possible even though the analogy to acting is perhaps a bit simplistic. Nevertheless, they do illustrate the point and are not so far-fetched as to be entirely unbelievable. After all, actors and actresses become literate in the context of the role they play by acquiring the discourse, i.e., the talk, the mannerisms, and the behavior of the role they play within its appropriate social context.

Finally, they obscure the ideological character of literacy in that these definitions of literacy are often advanced in the service of elites—e.g., educators and business and political leaders—as if their elite status were the natural and direct consequence of their ability to read and write (Freire, 1970; Stuckey, 1991).

The sociocultural view of literacy improves on the first two by making explicit the connections between language use and the context in which it is used. It highlights the ideological, cultural and political character of literacy, pointing to the relationship between the context of language use and the cultural identity of the learner. And, finally, it problematizes (Freire, 1970) the relationship between learner, literacy and the educator. It challenges the literacy educator to rethink literacy education practice in terms of being more egalitarian, inclusive, experiential and political (Quigley, 1997).

The Cultural Context of African American Literacy

Any discussion of culturally relevant literacy education must also account for the meaning of literacy in cultural context. In African American cultural contexts, literacy and language use involve a number of interconnected issues including: 1) the emergence of African American communities and of varieties of Black English as speech forms; 2) the role of African American English in the cultural solidification of those communities; 3) the relationship between language and cultural identity; 4) the value and importance of standard English in African American cultural perspectives; and 5) the social and psychological impacts of racism and their effect on African American language use.

The Emergence of African American English

Prior to the 1970s, there was a growing divide between linguists and cultural anthropologists on the one hand and sociologists on the other that the varieties of English spoken by African Americans were degenerate forms of English and not a result of any African influence. The view of Black speech as degenerate was consistent with the wider

view championed by sociologist E. Franklin Frazier (1938) that no African cultural elements survived to the Americas. Central to this view was the assertion that African features of language, tribal identification, and social organization had been obliterated by the slave experience. As a result, the only way to explain patterns of Black English were to consider them degenerate forms of standard English developed by a culturally impoverished people.

AAE continues to be a stigmatized language form. This is the case despite the fact that linguists have largely settled the question that African American English constitutes a rule-governed dialect of American English. With the publication of J. L. Dillard's *Black English: Its History and Usage in the United States* and William Labov's *Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular* in 1972, the view of AAE as a dialect became increasingly secure among professional linguists. However, as recently as January 1997 the Society of Linguists felt compelled to pass a resolution that in part said:

> The variety known as "Ebonics," "African American Vernacular English" (AAVE), and "Vernacular Black English" and by other names is systematic and rule-governed like all natural speech varieties. In fact, all human linguistic systems—spoken, signed, and written—are fundamentally regular. The systematic and expressive nature of the grammar and pronunciation patterns of the African American vernacular has been established by numerous scientific studies over the past thirty years. Characterizations of Ebonics as "slang," "mutant," "lazy," "defective," "ungrammatical," or "broken English" are incorrect and demeaning (Society of Linguists, 1997).[4]

There continues a considerable controversy over the status of AAE. In fact, the statements by the Society of Linguists and that of other professional associations, such as Teachers of English as a Second Language (TESOL), in support of AAE as a distinct dialect have become necessary precisely because of general ignorance about and disregard of the value of AAE as a distinct and rule-governed language. In response

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[4] The full text of this document is contained in Appendix A.

to the Oakland, California, school board's decision in December 1996 to recognize Ebonics as a separate language for the purpose of literacy instruction, Education Secretary Richard Riley declared that, while AAE was a nonstandard form of English, the federal government did not recognize Ebonics as a separate language and would not fund educational programs that did. Conservative politicians went out of their way to ridicule the Oakland school board's action.

Orlando Taylor, a communications professor at Howard University, explains:

> ...when you start to try to make a case with legitimizing Ebonics—a way of communicating by some, although not all African Americans speak it—you, in effect are talking about legitimizing a group of people. You are talking about bringing them to a status comparable to society at large. (Curry, 1997, p. 8).

Thus, attacks on the Oakland school board policy were viewed by many as attacks on African Americans as a people.

Even prominent African Americans denounced the recognition of Ebonics. Although he later reversed himself, Rev. Jesse Jackson said the Oakland school board decision was an "unacceptable surrender, borderlining on disgrace" (J. Jackson, CNN Transcript of Interview, December, 1996). For Jackson, elevating Ebonics to the status of language meant that Black students couldn't learn standard English. Georgia legislator Ralph David Abernathy, Jr., son of civil rights activist Ralph D. Abernathy, also decried Ebonics, saying that it had no place in education.

Nonstandard dialects have been devalued in societies around the world (Rickford, 1997, p. 12). There are no objective criteria for judging nonstandard from standard dialects. Indeed, the distinction often is determined on political and military grounds (Bryson, 1996). Thus, discussions about the status of AAE are essentially political in nature and have little to do with the actual qualities of the language. The popular view that AAE is really slang without any consistent rules that govern its genesis is not only incorrect but also politically and psychologically demoralizing to African Americans.

The Role of AAE in the Cultural Solidification of African American Communities

Despite its negative image, AAE has survived from the earliest days of slavery to the present time. The precise reasons for this survival are obscure yet it seems implausible that AAE could have survived and evolved without fulfilling at least two essential cultural functions—survival and identity. In order to understand the relationship between African American community and AAE, we need to understand the conditions under which African slaves formed communities.

The traditional view of early slave plantations was that they were comprised of individuals from different ethnic backgrounds who shared little in common other than their forced servitude (Kolchin, 1993). Any development of language or customs was a product of the slave environment and of interaction with Europeans and White Americans (Frazier, 1938). While specific elements of ethnic identity were quickly lost within a generation, a sense of community based on a broader notion of African American identity did emerge (Kolchin, 1993). Forced together by circumstance and suffering, slaves developed a culture, an admixture of generalized Africanisms (Herskovits, 1941/1958) and Anglo-American cultural elements. This, too, was the case with language patterns and led to the development of what is now recognized as AAE (Smitherman, 1994).

However, as slavery ended and the civil rights movement eventually secured basic civil and human rights, African Americans as a whole continued to be segregated in American society. The fact that African Americans have not been assimilated (e.g., Hacker, 1992; Kerner Report on Civil Disorders, 1968) has helped support the continued use of AAE as a cultural marker. Indeed, while many African Americans may not speak AAE, almost all understand it. Even middleclass professionals who interact with Whites in professional and social circles often speak AAE when relaxing among African Americans (Nelson, 1990). Black English functions to maintain a sense of cultural and racial identity, even among those African Americans whose identity and connection to the Black community is perhaps the most fragile.

Language, Identity, and Race Progress

Accepting AAE as a distinct English dialect raises other issues having to do with the speech community owning that dialect. Many African Americans also believe that AAE has no social capital in modern United States society (Baugh, 1983). So, many African Americans view standard English as the *lingua franca* for personal and social advancement. That Black English would be rejected by many of its speakers is indicative of the negative consequence of racism on African Americans' view of Black language and culture. The social and psychological impact of racism and its effect on African American language use is indeed difficult to gauge but is inextricably bound up with issues of identity, culture, and power (Colin & Preciphs, 1991).

To achieve power or status, African Americans have historically turned to the acquisition of literacy as a way to combat racism and inequality (Anderson, 1995; Gadsden, 1995). Education is seen as holding the promise of individual and social improvement (Delgado-Gaitan, 1987). During slavery and the Jim Crow era, access to education was severely limited (Anderson, 1995). In the face of this historically grounded discrimination, African Americans struggled against overwhelming odds to obtain literacy.

More recently, however, there is disturbing evidence that the traditionally high regard for education has eroded somewhat. Lack of educational achievement is attributed to learner resistance based on distrust of White-dominated educational processes and institutions. John Ogbu (1978, 1995) theorizes that this rejection of educational achievement among African American youth reflects what he calls cultural inversion. He explains that African Americans are "caste-like minorities" who face social structure barriers to advancement in American society (Ogbu, 1978). The basis for these barriers is racism and segregation. The systemic exclusion of African Americans from any broad and meaningful participation in American society has led to a backlash among segments of the African American community. This backlash represents a growing skepticism over whether social, political, and economic advancement are possible within America. Cornel West refers to this growing skepticism as nihilism that is destroying the vitality of African American culture (1990). This nihilistic attitude contributes to what Ogbu calls a cultural

inversion, i.e., a rejection of all things White (1995), including educational achievement.

In terms of schooling, then, African American youth are suspicious of White-run schools and other institutions. Resistance to schooling is interpreted by Ogbu as resistance to White oppression and as an affirmation of a black identity (1995). Despite this undercurrent, there continues to be a strong belief among African Americans that education is important to individual and race progress. The challenge, however, has been to achieve parity in educational access and to institute educational reform to respond to the sociocultural and educational needs of African American learners.

Implications for African American Literacy Education

Literacy education that does not address the sociocultural factors presented by African American learners handicaps those learners. Even "successful" programs miss the mark.[5] While they might equip students with functional skills, they generally do not enable students to handle the challenges of language use in problematic situations. Examples include handling conflict between supervisor and employee, resolving a disagreement with a store clerk over the purchase or return of an item, or making a complaint about a child's [White] teacher. In each of these and countless similar situations, African American language use in the face of White power and privilege often fails to win the day. In these cross-cultural encounters, African Americans are placed at a deficit, not because of the intrinsic lack of worth of Black language but because of the disconnectedness between African American modes of language use and those of Whites (Martin, 1991). African American adult literacy learners are at a disadvantage by not having access to or linguistic and cultural command of powerful discourses. This, then, represents a call to adult educators to rethink how literacy education addresses the culturally

[5] For example, see Martin's discussion of tech-prep in the context of culturally relevant literacy. While it is cited as a successful program it does not address any African American cultural elements.

based issues faced by African Americans within the larger White society.

These issues are reflected in Gee's concept of primary/secondary discourse (1993). Since a good number of African Americans do not grow up in communities where standard English is the norm, nor in integrated communities where exposure to standard English speakers is commonplace, it is natural that different attitudes and perceptions about standard English exist in the African American community as compared with other ethnic or racial groups, who after a generation or two do assimilate into mainstream society. For example, standing on the street corner at 47th and State Street in Chicago, one can hear a particular use of Black language that is altogether unlike standard English that one hears in the board room at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange. Take board members from the Mercantile Exchange and put them on 47th and State, and they are likely to feel as alienated as the young African American man from the corner of 47th and State will feel in the board room. In either scenario, one must become literate in the social context in order to successfully negotiate the other context. For many African American adult literacy learners, this means learning the discourse of mainstream America, not simply the grammar, spelling, and phonetic rules of standard English.

African American Language and Culture: What the Research Says About Bidialectal Approaches to Literacy Instruction

There is substantial indirect evidence that bidialectal approaches in adult literacy instruction are effective in developing standard English skills (Taylor, 1989; Campbell, 1994; Rickford & Rickford, 1995). It is curious that the research findings from the fields of linguistics and language education regarding bidialectal approaches to literacy instruction have yet to be applied to the field of adult literacy education. For example, in a recent survey of selected literature on the topic of African American English and education, Harris, Anderson, Bloome and Champion (1995) list 103 references on AAE research. Of these, only two explicitly address adults and these two do not address adult literacy education. Thus, any attempt to examine bidialectal instruction in adult liter-

acy must draw upon the research base relative to children's learning. Despite this limitation, the indirect evidence is plentiful that AAE can and should serve as a resource for teaching standard English literacy for adults.

The Rule-Governed Nature of AAE

Research over the past thirty years has shown that AAE is a non-standard, rule-governed English dialect spoken by African Americans. The major findings of this research are summarized below. However, the reader may find any number of excellent sources on this topic and is referred in particular to William Labov's *Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular* (1972); J. L. Dillard's *Black English: Its History and Usage in the United States* (1972); and Geneva Smitherman's *Talkin' and Testifyin': The Language of Black America* (1977). These studies generally find that AAE is a rule-governed dialect of English with distinct phonological and syntactical rules that bear strong resemblance to West African linguistic patterns; and due to shared West African roots it shows evidence of a relationship to other African-based languages in the Caribbean region.[6]

It is important to offer this information since there is much popular confusion about AAE as simply "hip" use of language or the result of lazy tongue. Many teachers confuse AAE dialect with the slang or street language, neither of which is rule-governed (Baugh, 1995). This false perception contributes, in part, to the negative view that teachers hold toward AAE (Covington, 1975).

Nonstandard Dialect in Childhood Language Education

Several studies have been conducted to assess the use of nonstandard dialect such as AAE in literacy instruction. In a study of Swedish dialect and standard speakers, an experimental group of dialect speakers

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[6] See Appendix C for examples of rules that govern syntax and pronunciation in AAE .

was taught to read in their nonstandard dialect (Österberg, 1961). They were then taught standard Swedish. A control group was taught entirely in standard Swedish. Österberg concluded that the dialect method was more effective in helping readers to learn standard Swedish, especially in terms of increasing reading rate and comprehension.

In a replication of the Österberg study, Bull conducted research on a Norwegian class of elementary school students (cited in Rickford & Rickford, 1995). The students were taught to read and write either in their Norwegian vernaculars or in standard Norwegian. After assessing progress, Bull concluded that, "With respect to reading abilities, the results...show that the vernacular children read significantly faster and better than the control subjects. It seems as if particularly the less bright children...made superior progress during the year compared with the poor readers in the control group" (as cited in Rickford & Rickford, 1995, p. 78).

Stewart (1969) argued that dialect readers held promise for African American students who spoke Black English. He suggested that, in many ways, the problems of teaching AAE speakers are more similar to the problems of teaching a child whose first language is Spanish than to those of teaching a child who speaks English. He raised the question, "Might not learning to read in an unfamiliar dialect have associated with it some of the problems which have been found to characterize learning to read in an unfamiliar language?" He suggested that bilingual teaching techniques may be relevant to the cross-dialect situation faced by African Americans learning standard English.[7] Stewart then asked: "If it has been considered pedagogically useful to adapt beginning reading materials to the word pronunciations of middle-class White children...then might it not also be useful to adapt beginning reading materials to the sentence patterns of lower class (African American) children" (p. 173). Stewart's prompting on this issue led to the development and implementation of a number of dialect readers used in bridge reading programs in the early 1970s.

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[7] Stewart wrote a dialect version of "A Visit from St. Nicholas," which a young girl named Lenora picked up and read. She read it well, exhibiting none of the problems associated with her reading of standard English texts.

Subsequent to Stewart's study, dialect readers were tried in a number of bridge reading programs. Rickford and Rickford (1995) report their research on schools in three cities: San Mateo, East Menlo Park, and East Palo Alto, California. They asked students to read texts in AAE that are designed to facilitate reading speed and comprehension. They are then used to bridge students to standard English when students read similar stories in standard English. Effectiveness of the text used was measured by administering a test of comprehension.

Rickford and Rickford found better results using standard English readers. Another study on this same group of students reported starting success using dialect readers (Maroney, Thomas, Lawrence, & Salcedo, 1994). They explain the differences by pointing to design differences in the studies and suggest that further work is needed to clarify the effectiveness of dialect readers. They noted important gender and age differences, saying that African American girls generally preferred and did better using standard English texts, while the boys and older students preferred and did better with the AAE texts.

Bidialectal approaches to language instruction have been successfully used (though not without controversy) in a number of school districts. For example, the eleven-year-old program in DeKalb county, Georgia, where 5th and 6th grade students in eight schools are taught to switch from their "home speech" to "school speech" is one in which contrastive analysis methods have proven effective. Contrastive analysis is a technique in which students are taught to recognize the rules governing the differences between AAE and standard English. Knowing these rules facilitates their ability to code-switch under prescribed circumstances. The *Atlanta Constitution* reported that "The [DeKalb Ebonics] program has won a 'center of excellence' designation from the National Council for Teachers of English. Last year, students who had taken the course had improved verbal test scores at every school" (Cumming, 1997, p. B1).

Bidialectal Approaches for Adolescents and Young Adults

A few studies look at college-age learners. Hanni Taylor's 1989 study, *Standard English, Black English, and Bidialectalism: A Contro-*

versy, reports significant gains using the contrastive analysis approach. Students translate AAE into standard English through the use of teacher-led drills. Working with African American college-level students, Taylor reported that a group of inner-city Aurora University students from Chicago who were taught with contrastive analysis techniques showed a 59% *reduction* in the use of Ebonics features in their standard English writing. By contrast, students taught by traditional methods showed an 8.5% *increase* in the use of Ebonics (Taylor, 1989, p. 12). This program still is used with great success at Aurora University.

Elizabeth Campbell (1994) also employed a bidialectal approach in her college-level speech and rhetoric class. Drawing on prior research (Harmon & Edelsky, 1989; Thompson, 1990), Campbell employed a "multi-discourse approach" in which she taught students about standard and nonstandard dialects, focusing on Black English. She then presented texts in both AAE and standard English to the students for their comprehension and critique. During this process, students learned to understand the politics of language. Students then were given a series of exercises in which they would use AAE or standard English. Campbell noted that, by the end of the term, students voluntarily chose to use standard English in socially appropriate situations, e.g., classroom debates or speeches. Campbell noted a 50% decrease in the use of AAE in classroom debates or public speeches.

Mary Hoover describes a "culturally appropriate approach" to teaching basic skills (Hoover, 1982). This is a college-level remedial program designed to assist students who are anywhere from four to seven years behind in literacy skills. The program assists students in acquiring sufficient language skill mastery in writing and reading to do college-level work. The culturally appropriate philosophy used in the program focuses on high expectations for students, avoidance of the use of discriminatory or deficit terminology (e.g., "disadvantaged," "poor reader," "special education," etc.); group approaches to instruction; and use of African American cultural themes to affirm the identity of students in the program. Emphasis is placed on the affective and attitudinal elements of instruction, since the purpose is to counteract the deleterious effects on learners of the myth that "African and Black people contributed nothing to the march of civilization" (p. 23). The key characteristic of this program is infusion of culturally-based African American cur-

ricular content into language skills courses. Hoover claims success in utilizing this approach at the institution she reports.

These studies suggest that there is significant evidence in support of using students' vernacular language as a means of teaching standard English. Two approaches in particular employ elements of language critique: the cross-analysis method and the multi-discourse method. They offer excellent examples of practical pedagogical approaches, and they are effective for older as well as younger students. When will adult literacy educators use this knowledge base to address issues in African American adult literacy learning?

Black English and the Politics of Language and Adult Literacy

Despite the growing research base that supports the use of vernacular language in instructional settings, the use of bidialectal approaches to literacy instruction in American educational settings is relatively rare. In fact, the overwhelming and prejudicial bias among educators is to view anything other than standard English as either abnormal or ineffective. However, although literacy means the acquisition of the linguistic and cultural knowledge of mainstream American society, it should not mean having to leave behind one's cultural identity. Culturally relevant literacy education serves to enhance literacy as well as enlarge cultural identity. Standard English provides African American adults access to powerful discourses with which to combat racism and improve their lives. To speak nonstandard English is generally regarded as a mark of ethnic identity, ignorance, or inferiority. This represents one of the most poignant manifestations of the hegemony of middle-class European American culture. And it is prejudice that should be avoided in literacy education.

But implementing culturally relevant bidialectal literacy education is more complex than simply asking literacy educators to relieve themselves of any prejudices regarding nonstandard dialects. Even though linguists and cultural anthropologists have done much to discredit the view that nonstandard English speakers are inferior in some cognitive or cultural way (Labov, 1972; Scribner & Cole, 1978), it is not at all uncommon for teachers to continue to view individual students who do not

speak standard English as less capable or coming from deficient backgrounds (Hoover, 1978). Studies have shown that teachers' reactions to nonstandard English are generally negative (Hoover, 1978; Washington & Miller-Jones, 1989; Rickford & Rickford, 1995). Surprisingly, this is even the case among African American teachers who speak AAE (Hoover, 1978; Washington & Miller-Jones, 1989). That many literacy teachers have such negative attitudes toward African American English suggests a strong need to provide teacher training to correct this problem.

Furthermore, it is not unusual for African American learners to view AAE in a negative way (Hoover, 1978; Washington & Miller-Jones, 1989). In a conversation some years ago with a class of African American learners in an adult literacy program in Chicago, I had the opportunity to ask, "Why do you come to this class to learn how to read and write?" One young African American woman, a single mother whose daughter was sitting in the rear of the room playing with chalk and chalkboard, answered: "I'm here 'cause I want to learn to talk proper. You can't get a good job, y'know, if you don't talk proper 'cause people think you dumb and I ain't dumb" (anonymous female student, GED program, City Colleges of Chicago, 1988). This statement met with a chorus of approval and agreement from other students. It was as if they had to learn Standard English to prove they were not ignorant.

The negative view of Black English is so pervasive that it represents a major barrier to any proposal to incorporate bidialectal approaches into literacy instruction. The view of American society as a melting pot in which different ethnic groups are assimilated into a homogeneous collection of individuals reinforces the notion that anyone who is different, e.g., does not use standard English and is therefore illiterate, is a foreigner and un-American. For African Americans who grow up in this country, to use vernacular English is to be placed in a position of powerlessness. Consider the analogy between Black vernacular English and Spanish among Hispanic Americans. The English-only movement in many states and cities, especially in the South and West, is indicative of the almost xenophobic character of discussions of language policy in the United States. Anything other than standard English is considered un-American and dangerous.

This ethnocentric view of standard English belies the fact that in many, if not most, societies it is necessary to be bilingual. Yet, vernaculars persist because it is only human to develop language patterns that reflect the region, community and history of a people (Bryson, 1996; Ferdman, 1990). Issues of cultural identity are inevitably bound up with language and language use. In a culturally pluralistic society, language is so bound up with cultural identity that to enforce the suppression of different dialects in favor of a forced national standard is to suppress the people who speak that dialect (Ferdman, 1990). Literacy learners should learn standard English but should not be forced to choose between "good" English and "bad" English.

Instead, I propose that adult educators adopt a more tolerant view of nonstandard English since nonstandard dialects are connected to the cultural context and background of the learners. Differences in language usage reflect cultural differences and, therefore, are usually devalued or privileged depending on the status of the speaker's culture (Taylor, 1989). In contrast, culturally relevant literacy education seeks to confront the devaluing of African American nonstandard dialect and culture by re-centering the adult literacy practice in terms of African American culture and AAE. Alan Quigley, in his recent book, *Rethinking Literacy Education*, says:

> The field of adult literacy education is so varied in its problems, the influences of the social context so dominating, and the overall training of practitioners so limited that our practice tends to be something of a repository for our personal belief systems and the ideas we have absorbed from the popular and political perspectives [on adult literacy]". (1997, p. 108)

Since there is little in the way of a coherent theoretical or philosophical consensus among adult literacy practitioners, it is not surprising that adult literacy practitioners teach from their own views and biases about learners and literacy education.

Culturally Relevant Adult Literacy Instruction

Bernardo Ferdman says that the "cultural framing of literacy becomes more obvious" in culturally diverse societies (1990, p. 186). Because culture results from social interaction and human organization (Ferdman), it is important to examine literacy within a sociocultural context. One of the implications of this is that adult literacy education should begin from the cultural perspective of the learner. For learners whose cultural background is primarily oral, it is vitally important to begin instruction with activities and materials that draw on the oral culture of the learner.

Literacy education, therefore, is a kind of acculturation process—one in which learners acquire not only technical language skills but also the coded meanings and socially appropriate behaviors that accompany the *use* of those technical language skills (Gee, 1990). When literacy educators teach skills only, learners, especially learners from culturally marginalized backgrounds, do not understand how language is to be used in new social situations. In other words, why does a gang member need to learn standard English if he is only going to "be hangin' with the homies?" Under what circumstances is he going to need to use standard English? It is easy to see the disconnection between the learners' life experiences and the classroom processes. Culturally relevant literacy education necessitates the identification and learning of the cultural codes that frame social interactions. Since the focus for the adult educator is on social interactions, it only makes sense to begin with social interactions that are familiar within the cultural frame of reference of the learner. Once these have been established, the introduction of new cultural frames of reference can be employed. But, first, it is important to establish the need for particular kinds of social interactions. This will inevitably involve critical thinking and problem-solving in the adult classroom. The need for identifying new social roles and associated specialized language use is reflected in the need to focus on problems of direct concern to learners, including drug use, welfare dependency, poor health care and disease prevention, sexual harassment and abuse, tenant rights, religious conversion, job discrimination, or any of a myriad of issues facing African American literacy learners. By blending effective language learning with culturally relevant instruction, adult literacy edu-

cators can more effectively engage African American adult learners in their classrooms as compared with the traditional approaches to literacy education.

Conclusion

Recent scholarship has given rise to a perspective on literacy that emphasizes the cultural, political, and ideological contexts in which language use is embedded. To be effective with marginalized populations such as African American adults, adult literacy educators must incorporate cultural elements as central aspects of literacy education. For African American literacy programs this means two things: 1) developing a focus on language and culture in the literacy classroom in which the historical, political, psychological, and cultural elements of language use in the African American sociocultural perspective are emphasized; and 2) transforming literacy curricula to incorporate issues, themes, and problems that are of particular relevance to African American learners within the context of their daily lives and experiences.

There is a considerable research tradition on the first point, mostly within the context of childhood education. There is a developing body of research on the second point. More research needs to be done in the context of adult literacy to explore the dimensions of culturally relevant education, including the use of bidialectal instruction for African American learners. This article represents a call for literacy educators who serve African American adults to make literacy education more culturally relevant and for researchers to explore the ways in which cultural elements, such as AAVE, can improve literacy instruction. Neither of these programs should be undertaken, however, without full consideration of the ideological, political, and contested nature of African American culture in general and bidialectal instruction and AAE in particular.

The sociocultural context of literacy for African American adult learners is central to the inclusion of African American adult literacy learners in the mainstream of American society in the near future. Du Bois said that the twentieth century would be defined by the color line—the difference between Black and White. At the end of the twentieth century we are still witnessing a vilification of African American culture

that threatens African Americans' sense of identity and community. Competency-based, functional approaches to African American adult literacy education are not succeeding in overcoming educational and economic barriers to racial advancement. The implementation of culturally relevant adult literacy education that incorporates bidialectal instructional approaches valuing African American language and culture is long overdue.

Appendix A

Resolution on the Oakland "Ebonics" Issue Unanimously Adopted at the Annual Meeting of the Linguistic Society of America, Chicago, Illinois January 3, 1997

Whereas there has been a great deal of discussion in the media and among the American public about the 18 December 1996 decision of the Oakland School Board to recognize the language variety spoken by many African American students and to take it into account in teaching Standard English, the Linguistic Society of America, as a society of scholars engaged in the scientific study of language, hereby resolves to make it known that:

1. The variety known as "Ebonics," "African American Vernacular English" (AAVE), and "Vernacular Black English" and by other names is systematic and rule-governed like all natural speech varieties. In fact, all human linguistic systems—spoken, signed, and written—are fundamentally regular. The systematic and expressive nature of the grammar and pronunciation patterns of the African American vernacular has been established by numerous scientific studies over the past thirty years. Characterizations of Ebonics as "slang," "mutant," "lazy," "defective," "ungrammatical," or "broken English" are incorrect and demeaning.

2. The distinction between "languages" and "dialects" is usually made more on social and political grounds than on purely linguistic ones. For example, different varieties of Chinese are popularly regarded as "dialects," though their speakers cannot understand each other, but speakers of Swedish and Norwegian, which are regarded as separate "languages," generally understand each other. What is important from a linguistic and educational point of view is not whether AAE is called a "language" or a "dialect" but rather that its systematicity be recognized.

3. As affirmed in the LSA Statement of Language Rights (June 1996), there are individual and group benefits to maintaining vernacular speech varieties and there are scientific and human advantages to

linguistic diversity. For those living in the United States there are also benefits in acquiring Standard English and resources should be made available to all who aspire to mastery of Standard English. The Oakland School Board's commitment to helping students master Standard English is commendable.

4. There is evidence from Sweden, the US, and other countries that speakers of other varieties can be aided in their learning of the standard variety by pedagogical approaches which recognize the legitimacy of the other varieties of a language. From this perspective, the Oakland School Board's decision to recognize the vernacular of African American students in teaching them Standard English is linguistically and pedagogically sound.

Resolution on the Oakland "Ebonics" Issue Unanimously Adopted at the Annual Meeting of the Linguistic Society of America, Chicago, Illinois, January 3, 1997. Available online at

On-line: http://www.lsadc.org/ebonics.html

Appendix B

Statement by the Board of Directors of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)

The Board of Directors of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) is committed to strengthening the effective teaching and learning of English around the world. Its mission is to develop professional expertise and to foster effective communication in diverse settings while respecting individual language rights.

In accordance with its Policy on Language Varieties, October 1996, TESOL affirms that the variety of English known as African American Vernacular English, Black English, Ebonics and sometimes by other names, has been shown through research to be a rule-governed, linguistic system, with its own lexical, phonological, syntactic and discourse patterns and, thus, deserves pedagogical recognition.

The Board notes that effective educational programs recognize and value the linguistic systems that children bring to school. These programs use these linguistics systems as an aid and resource to facilitate the acquisition of Standard American English. Research and experience have shown that children learn best if teachers respect the home language and use it as a bridge in teaching the language of the school and wider society. Likewise, if the children's cultural and social backgrounds are valued, their self-respect and self-confidence are affirmed and new learning is facilitated.

TESOL thus advocates that teacher education include instruction in linguistics and in developing partnerships between the home and school.

Statement by the Board of Directors of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), March 10, 1997, available on-line:
http://www.cal.org

Appendix C

Some Rules of Syntax and Pronunciation in AAE

Linguistic research has identified a number of the rules governing AAVE. Following are some examples of these rules. Many linguists have traced the syntactical and phonetic origin of AAVE to west African languages, especially Yoruba, Fongbe, and Twi, among others This list is presented as illustrative only and is not comprehensive.

Repetition of noun subject with pronoun	My father, he work there
Question patterns without "do"	What it come to?
Same form of noun for singular and plural	one boy; five boy
No tense indicated in verb; emphasis on manner or character of action	I know it good when he ask me.
Same verb form for all subjects	I know; you know; he know; we know; they know Sound rule in West African languages
No consonant pairs	*jus* (for *just): men* (for *mend*)
Few long vowels or two-part vowels (diphthongs)	*rat* or *raht* (for *right*); *tahm* (for *time)*
No /r/ sound	Black English: *mo* (for *more*)
No /th/ sound	Black English: *souf* (for *south)* and *dis (*for *this)*
Habitual "be"	Black English: You know he be trippin'.

Note. Adapted from *Standard English, Black English, and bidilectalism: A controversy*, by H. Taylor, 1989, and *Black talk*, by G. Smitherman, 1977.

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